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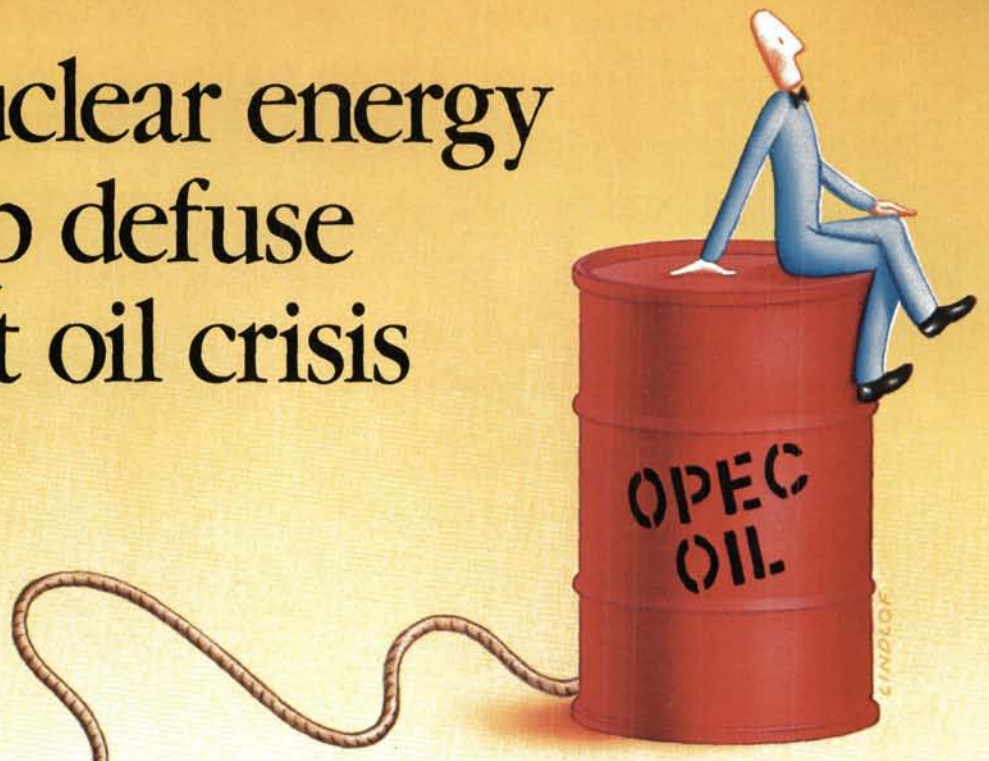
How nuclear energy can help defuse the next oil crisis



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FROM WASHINGTON

BALLOTS AND BLOODSHED

The debate over whether Congress should "invoke" the War Powers Act over events in the Persian Gulf is bizarre since, on its face, the War Powers Act requires no invoking. Under this law, written by Republican Senator Jacob Javits and passed overwhelmingly in 1973, the president is supposed to consult with Congress before or, if necessary, immediately after placing American troops into actual or imminent "hostilities." If Congress doesn't authorize the military action within 60 days (with a 30-day extension), the troops are supposed to be withdrawn.

The trouble is that President Reagan, in his various military adventures, has refused to obey this law. Congressional leaders weren't informed about the invasion of Grenada, obviously planned in advance, until long after the planning had started. Even after 241 American soldiers died in the bombing of their Beirut barracks, the administration insisted that no "hostilities" were going on in Lebanon. Ditto about the Gulf today, even as American seamen there qualify for combat pay. For good measure, the administration insists that the War Powers Act is unconstitutional—an infringement of the president's authority to make foreign policy.

This bold constitutional claim comes from the same administration that campaigns for its Supreme Court nominee on the grounds that we must stop using the Constitution to thwart the democratic will of the majority as expressed through its elected representatives. The War Powers Act is just such an expression of democracy, like all laws. But it is more: it is a law specifically designed to make decisions about war and peace more democratic. In this case, though, says the administration, democracy must give way. (And Robert Bork, conveniently, agrees.)

The constitutional question is not whether Congress may "micromanage" foreign policy, as the current buzzword would have it. The question is whether Congress may assert any right at all to share in one of the most important decisions any society makes: when to send its sons to war. The president has up to 90 days to start a fight and to make his case. The modest assertion of the War Powers Act is that, at some point, he can't proceed without the approval of the other elected branch.

Let's talk "original intent." The notion that the president can make war despite the specific objection of Congress would startle the Framers. Naturally, the Constitution doesn't address the issue directly. It gives the president certain specific foreign policy powers (appointing ambassadors, acting as "Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy") and gives other specific powers to Congress (appropriating military funds, declaring war). From these sparse threads, conservative constitutional activists weave a doctrine that the president's foreign policy powers are virtually dictatorial.

At one point in their deliberations, the Framers explicitly reserved to Congress the power to "make war." This was changed to "declare war" in order to preserve the president's ability to respond to a surprise attack. But constitutional provisions should not be construed to be meaningless. (There's an impressive Latin phrase for this principle, which escapes me at the moment.) "Declare war" must mean more than a congressman's sacred right to make a pompous speech.

Congress has only declared war five times in our history, whereas by one count there have been more than 200 episodes of military hostility. In most cases, Congress had no objection to the president's action. But over the decades, presidents got fancier and fancier ideas of what they were free to do without specific congressional authorization, culminating in Vietnam. The idea of the War Powers Act was to reassert Congress's authority, while recognizing the realities of superpower obligations in a nuclear world. Some argued at the time that the act was unconstitutional because it allowed the president to make war for 60 days without a declaration from Congress!

Supreme Court rulings in this area are sparse. The leading bit of doctrine on the

continued on page 49

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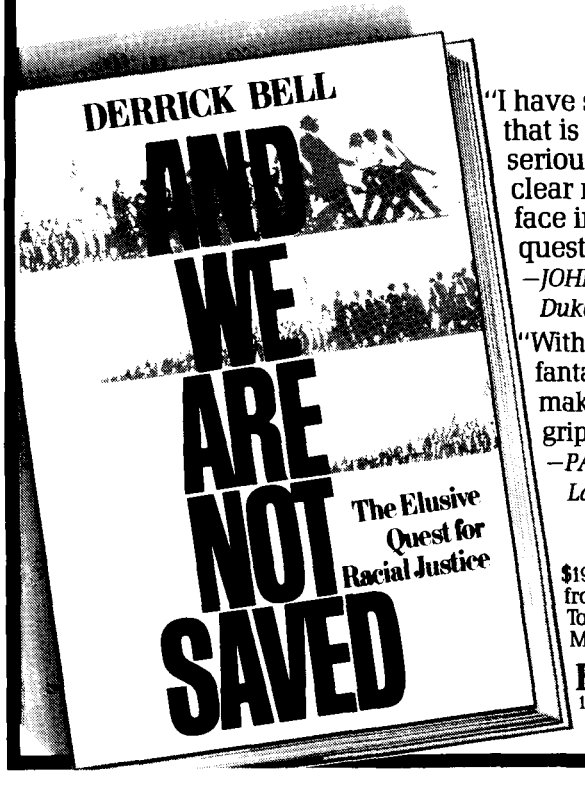

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INDIA'S ECONOMIC PASSAGE

To the editors:

Although it is gratifying that TNR has recognized India's commitment to democracy, it is wrong to assert that the Indian economy has made little progress in the last 40 years ("Passage to Democracy," September 7). Agriculture has been transformed from stagnation to "green revolution." India produced 50 million tonnes of food grains in 1950; today it averages 150 million tonnes, sufficient for our purposes. India has diversified its industrial base and infrastructure; more significantly, it now has the capacity to absorb high technologies. India has a pool of skilled manpower that is the third largest in the world; in quality it is second to none. There has been a steady rate of growth, currently around five percent per annum. We have avoided both indebtedness and inflationary pressures.

We recognize that much more needs to be done. But the economic and social transformation that has taken place and the material progress that has led to a better standard for a very large number of people must be duly recognized. All this has been achieved under a democratic and secular political system, no mean achievement considering the present world environment.

VIVEK KATJU
Embassy of India
Washington, D.C.

ARIAS'S CODA

To the editors:

Morton M. Kondracke implies that Costa Rican president Oscar Arias, although perhaps not publicly admitting it, largely supports U.S. efforts to fund the *contras* and exert pressure on the Sandinista government ("Who Wants Peace?" September 28). He neglects to mention the pressure Washington is exerting on Costa Rica to accept the "American point of view," including the suspension of $100 million-plus in economic assistance, maneuvers to block international bank loans to Costa Rica, and successful efforts to cut that country's exports to the U.S. Former ambassador to Costa Rica Francis McNeil said in July, "It is impossible to avoid the suspicion that Costa Rica's 'less favored nation treatment' is a form of revenge for having the temerity to disagree with us about the *contras*." Small wonder, if Kondracke is even half-right, that we're currently hearing a more pro-U.S. position from the Costa Ricans. According to an Arias aide, quoted in the *Nation*, "The Reagan administration is blind, obsessed with Nicaragua. But they are not going to succeed in overthrowing the Sandinistas. In the end they are going to destroy Costa Rican democracy instead."

CHARLES MORGAN
Amherst, Massachusetts

Morton Kondracke replies:

On September 7, President Arias told John McLaughlin, "It is true that they [the Sandinistas] are Marxists. It is true that if they consolidate themselves they are going to try to export the revolution to undermine Costa Rica. . . . I don't want them in power." He said he hopes his peace plan will lead to free elections in which the Sandinistas will be voted out. I doubt he said this to relieve U.S. economic pressure, while at the same time opposing *contra* funding. I think, as he often says, he wants to deprive the Sandinistas of the *contra* "excuse" and have them reveal their true colors, and that he believes the U.S., in the end, will come to Costa Rica's rescue. He has badly miscalculated the state of American politics.

MIDDLE-CLASS WRITERS

To the editors:

It's obvious that starving writers scribbling in their garrets don't pay taxes and can't use deductions that supposedly really benefit mainly literary moguls (TRB, "Book 'Em," September 14 & 21). But there are also legions of middle-income writers who need deductions in order to afford the substantial costs of writing projects. It is also true that literature and civilization will survive an unamended tax code. Yes, culture can be quite visible even when only leisured gentry are able to participate. But is this adequate justification for accepting a tax code that will return us to an aristocratic monopoly of viable literary endeavors? Without the well-publicized laments of Kitty Kelley et al., the legitimate grievances of middle-income writers would

continued on page 49

World War II was won on three fronts: Europe, the Pacific and Hollywood.

In 1941, the film industry was enlisted as the larger-than-life recruiter for Uncle Sam, producing scores of "entertainment" pictures in which the propaganda message received top billing.

The inside story of the making of movies such as *Mission to Moscow*, *Mrs. Miniver*, *Dragon Seed*, and *The Purple Heart*, *Hollywood Goes to War* reflects how government censors snipped and shaped the celluloid image to project a picture of our "democratic" Russian and Chinese allies, our barbaric, fascist enemies, and our sweetly harmonious homefront.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
OCTOBER 19, 1987

THE CLOSING OF THE DEMOCRATIC MIND

As Reaganism self-destructs before our eyes, it is hard to imagine more auspicious circumstances for the Democrats to retrieve the presidency. Despite this, it is also hard to imagine more ominous beginnings for the party out of power than the events of recent months. It's not just that two of the candidates widely seen as among its more plausible contenders have now fallen on their own swords. Even more startling is how small a void the departures of Gary Hart and Joe Biden have left. To be sure, there have been the usual postscripts, some bitter and recriminatory, some just mawkish, and of course the wan heroics suggesting another run in 1992. But no one really seems to believe that these candidacies represented anything much beyond themselves. That is, they expressed little more than the ambitions of two men with, it turns out, serious character deficiencies.

Even the failed aspirants themselves appeared to realize, not only in the dark night of the soul but in the glare of the klieg lights, the elusiveness and insubstantiality of their inner identities. That's one reason they so often allude to themselves in the third person, as if that distance somehow added gravitas to the featherweight persona. It's also why Biden routinely lied, or fantasized, about his own accomplishments and chose for his more precise autobiographical sallies fragments of other people's lives.

The leave-taking from the presidential race by the second of Patrick Caddell's hollow men is a good thing, if only as a cautionary lesson for other politicians. Still, where does that leave the Democrats? For the moment the action has moved from the campaign trail to Congress, where, serendipitously, Senator Biden, presiding over the Judiciary Committee's hearing on the nomination of Robert Bork to the Supreme Court, will seem to have received a new lease on political life. But if Bork has lost his battle for public opinion it is not because his Democratic senatorial critics have put on an elevating performance. In fact, there is something absurd, as the *Wall Street Journal* has argued, in the spectacle of Biden, Ted Kennedy, Pat Leahy, and Howard Metzenbaum—given their own distinctive and peculiar histories of betraying the public trust—sitting as judges about who would make a good justice.

The Democrats grabbing the headlines these days are not the sort that add either depth or luster to a party whose way to the White House should already have been cleared by the fact that the present incumbents constitute the shallowest and shabbiest rump to occupy it in years. It is almost too frightening to be comical, for example, that the fate of Central America is being decided—whether by caprice or deceit it hardly matters—by the likes of the present Speaker, Jim Wright, a visionless Texas pol (now much adored by the keepers of liberal orthodoxy such as Mary McGrory) whose only certifiable achievements are the feeding with public pork of the businesses in his own back yard.

Nor is there anything uplifting or reassuring to be said of the plodding and unimaginative Senate majority leader, Robert Byrd, who has now taken it into his head to introduce legislation that would require congressional approval of continued U.S. naval operations in the Persian Gulf—a policy that seems at last to be scoring some successes, not only military but diplomatic. In both Nicaragua and the Gulf, the Democratic opposition shows itself willing to trade the country's long-term strategic interests for the party's short-term tactical gain. In the spirit of his Speaker, Representative Peter Kostmayer told Comandante Daniel Ortega just how chintzy his democratic gestures could be in order to satisfy Congress. Now that's statesmanship: an inability to distinguish between opposition to Reagan and contempt for other people's freedoms.

Seventy years ago in these pages, Walter Lippmann wrote that "there isn't a decent public servant in Washington who doesn't breathe a sigh of relief when Congress adjourns." To be fair to the Congress of today, the present administration has done more than its share to invite mischievous interventions by the legislative branch. Yet this does not excuse the Democrats for exploiting and distorting, largely because they smell Republican blood, the ambiguities of our constitutional system. In foreign policy especially, the Democrats have taken every imaginable opportunity to assert power without responsibility. As

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Lippmann put it, the danger arises from the Constitution itself, a constitution that created "a government in which those who make the laws have no organic relation to those who execute them." It is that piece of genius we call the separation of powers. But to work it requires a forbearance that the congressional Democrats have long since abjured. As to foreign policy, of late, the Democrats would have us believe, in effect, that the doctrine of separation is all but obsolete.

Contrast the Democrats' refusal to allow the executive an independent sphere of action to their enthusiasm for the independence of the courts, whose practice of creating all kinds of rights against the will of the majority they have been so zealously protecting these last weeks. An unfettered court and a manacled executive is, then, the ambiguous doctrinal legacy, the haphazard constitutional mutant, passed on from the political menu-makers on Capitol Hill to the candidates on the hustings in Iowa and New Hampshire.

Only on occasion does one of the Democratic candidates dare to dissent from the received wisdom of his party. Not only on constitutional questions, but on matters of political substance and of partisan style, there is a desultory near-unanimity among those who aspire to the nomination in Atlanta. That's one reason that the campaign is so boring and that almost no one beyond the candidates and their inner circles seems to have a big emotional stake in the outcome.

Maybe it's different for some of the 20-odd percent now counted in Jesse Jackson's corner. Many of them really do just the way lesser symbolic leaders (celebrities) have always been treated: in personal terms.

THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST

BY CHARLES PAUL FREUND

This Week		Last Week	Weeks on Chart
1.	WAR POWER TO THE PEOPLE	5	13

Gulf. Even the Hill doesn't seem enthusiastic about invoking the War Powers Act, but it's one way to make the White House say what it thinks it's doing. Polls are supportive, but Reagan is merely dining out on Khomeini. Nobody buys the jerry-built excuses being offered as policy, while efforts to dismiss the closing of sea lanes due to mines as "nuisance" victories are plain bizarre. If Iran doesn't regard its actions as nuisances, should the U.S.?

2.	STRIKE FORCE	4	2

NFL strike. Aside from negotiation updates, there have been two major prongs to strike coverage. One was Sunday survival, a tribute to the cultural forces the strikers are up against. The second consists of features about the replacements, shoving them toward celebrity. Too many people need pro football for it not to continue in some form.

3.	GONE WITH THE WIND	2	8

Bork. With the Bork nomination totally politicized and tied to opinion polls, an interesting new line has developed on the South. Blacks have become so important, the line goes, that Southern senators can't afford to alienate the bloc on a major black issue. Because Bork has emerged as such an issue, he's through. We haven't been here since Reconstruction.

4.	OFFING THE BOOK	—	1

Veil. If Woodward's book—or at least the 19 deathbed words—is a hoax, it's just Woodward's problem. A much bigger problem arises if it's true. Here's the ultimate CIA director blowing covers and off-the-books operations as though he were Phil Agee. Frank Snepp got put under a rock for less. Question 1, as the *Post*'s own review noted, is why Casey would have told Woodward any of this. Question 2 is how much Casey has damaged the CIA.

5.	DRAMATIS PERSONAE	*	19

1988. This is less the Year of Character than of characters. The "character" issue is often described as (1) arising from a lack of issues and (2) evidence that the grueling selection system works. Uh-uh. Outgoing presidents set the stage for successor races. Thanks to Reagan, we have a race for Symbol. The press is treating candidates

*Item resurfaces in the Zeitgeist after at least one week's absence.

6.	DRY RUN	—	1

Ethiopia. The rains have failed in Ethiopia, millions face starvation, and the U.S. is sending aid. Did this become news (*a*) two months ago, when the science press noted the lack of rain or (*b*) last week, when the aid began? The West prides itself on aid, but it's the aid that sells papers, not the distress it alleviates. At work is the Pelagian Heresy, a focus on good deeds that get you into heaven.

7.	PERIOD OF INCUBATION	*	26

AIDS. The mainstream press has calmed on AIDS, but at the edges the action is furious. Some gay reporters, a fringe of the left, and some apolitical researchers are challenging conventional AIDS thinking. The dolphin deaths, Epstein-Barr Virus, dengue fever, mosquitoes, germ warfare research, and syphilis are part of the debate, as is whether HIV has anything to do with AIDS. Indeed, the *New York Native* argues that HIV testing is dangerous.

8.	DRIVING FORWARD	*	3

New Age. So many ads use '60s hits as jingles that they've lost their boomer impact. The next move is even more pregnant: New Age music. Mercury is the first to try New Age sounds and ideas to sell a product (e.g., new cars will be presented as "evolutionary"). *Publisher's Weekly* is featuring *pages* of New Age titles. If the New Age can dump its loonies, a political move is coming.

9.	THE NAME GAME	6	2

Reagan now. Next time you watch a public affairs show, score the following: How many times is Reagan referred to in an active sense? How often are the formulations "the White House" and "the administration" used instead, even when referring to presidential attitudes and decisions? These are venerable phrases, but Reagan's number gets called mostly when he's discussed personally. In the vocabulary of governance, he's disappearing.

10.	THE PAY OF ALL FLESH	—	1

Year of the Bimbo. Donna Rice's jeans endorsement was a real coup; she's got a future in L.A. in drive-in action movies. If you live in a city, say goodbye. Jessica Hahn's million-dollar *Playboy* layout must be the most naked spread that magazine ever ran. Congratulations and so long. Fawn Hall wants to break into broadcasting. Good luck. She'd do well to recall the distinction between notoriety and celebrity, even if no one else does.

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care, having linked the black coming-of-age in American politics to his mercurial star. But if there is one thing certain in this race, it's that the front-runner won't be on the ticket. And before anyone says that this certainty is because of racism, ask yourself: What if Jesse Jackson were white? The truth is that he'd be a laughingstock. As it is, he's gotten a free ride and the simulacrum of respect. That is due to a residual, patronizing racism that refuses to hold a black candidate to even the abysmally low standards to which we hold white candidates. Even now, after the Biden brouhaha over the meaning and integrity of words, Jackson's statements go virtually unexamined.

At a gathering in Los Angeles last month, for example, Jackson chided a young black lawyer who had asked whether the candidate's relations with Jews had improved: "Let the Jews speak for themselves." He also used the occasion to complain about "Jewish support" for South Africa. To what could this possibly refer? American Jews are overwhelmingly opposed to the apartheid regime in South Africa—and not just in a lip-service, Reagan-style way. On South Africa, as on practically every other political issue, Jews are more liberal than any other identifiable group except blacks.

Jackson's people have attempted to explain away this latest evidence of the candidate's alarming Jew obsession by saying he actually meant "Israeli" support of South Africa. There are two problems with this explanation. First, Israel gives no more "support" to South Africa than our own country, France, Belgium, Sweden, Switzerland, Japan, the Arab states, or—for that matter—black African states whose trade with the pariah nation far exceeds Israel's. Second, if Jackson unconsciously said "Jewish" when he meant "Israeli," this makes hash of his treasured distinction between criticizing Israel and insulting Jews. Here is a man who can't possibly make real coalitions.

Jackson may understand the limits of his destiny. His goal is to build his supporters into a veto group that—by threatening to "take a walk" next November—will keep the party, its candidates, and its platform from straying too far from the left. But Jackson's positions are only slightly more egregious versions of the party consensus anyway.

Take Michael Dukakis, whom you may have to take, since he may have already raised more money than all the remaining contenders combined. Here's a pragmatist on many domestic issues, non-ideological, aware of the bottom line. He's a governor after all, and one who has learned not to raise taxes. But on foreign policy there are, as someone once said about Ronald Reagan, "gaps in his ignorance." So he parrots the left isolationist line—not an isolationism from strength, which is the style on the right, but an isolationism of weakness and abdication. So callous about other people's torments under tyranny, Dukakis casually trips off his tongue the epithet "mercenaries" as a synonym for the *contras*. It's not truthful and it's not fair,

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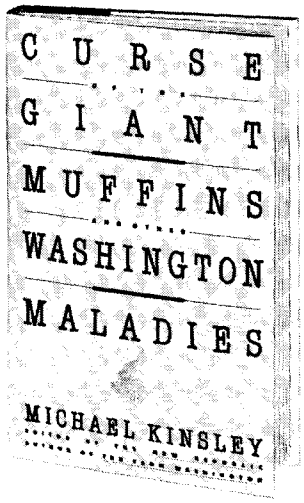

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even if you're against *contra* aid.

On domestic policy, the Democratic Party has lots of position papers but nothing like a coherent vision. In deference to the all-powerful voters of Iowa, there are sundry plans to coddle American agriculture. And, of course, there are those ever-expanding aforementioned rights. That's not policy but politics, intended to appeal to all of the interest groups who have just one more right to claim as theirs. Rights are good; that's why, the literalist says, they're not called wrongs. But rights alone do not make for a good society. Indeed, the proliferation of rights, and the cultural fallout from these rights, may well underlay many of society's ills, physical as well as psychological. This is a conservative notion in its suspicion of abstractions—but some things are true even if it is conservatives who say them. And Democrats have been too busy or too snobbish to worry about the moral struggles of ordinary people against the mandated rights that impose on their lives. Democrats need to worry about these things, lest the mean-spirited conservative revival, now stymied by Reaganite overreaching, be bolstered again by Democratic indifference to legitimate social and ethical concerns.

There is one candidate who at least knows the language of these concerns. Already running third in the national polls behind Jackson and Dukakis, Senator Albert Gore also has been marginally more skeptical of the arms control enthusiasms that have swept through the party. Cuts only make sense to him if they don't destabilize the nuclear balance. Temperamentally rather more reflective and careful than the average politician, he's not as pathetically eager as his opponents to be persuaded by the foreign policy implications of Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms.

Unlike the two departed hopefuls, Gore is a man in time and in place, recognizable by his values and their origins. He lays legitimate claim, on grounds both of character and opinion, to those voters who waited in vain for either Bill Bradley or Sam Nunn to join the fray. He has not yet given the kind of brilliant address on Soviet-American relations that Bradley recently delivered at the Chautauqua conference. But at a candidates' forum on September 27 sponsored by Iowa's leading unilateralist pressure group, the Stop the Arms Race Political Action Committee (STARPAC), Gore was alone among the contenders in exhibiting any understanding of the world as it is—a place where one does not announce which weapons systems one hopes to abandon before negotiations have begun or pretend (as Paul Simon and Jesse Jackson did repeatedly) that differences between the United States and the Soviet Union are due merely to a "lack of understanding." Bruce Babbitt repeatedly said that reliance on nuclear weapons to keep the peace was "immoral." Senator Gore alone defended deterrence, as he defended the integrity of our alliances against Dukakis's slipshod animadversions.

We confess to an admiration for Gore from the start of his career, and he's been a friend of the magazine and its editors. Still, it's too early to endorse. We're waiting to see if any of the other candidates can reverse the intellectual rigor mortis that now afflicts the Democratic mind.

NOTEBOOK

□ TRICK OR TREATY:

Reagan puts tough terms on arms deal

—*New York Times*, September 15

NEW CONCESSIONS ARE MADE BY U.S. ON MISSILE ACCORD

—*Philadelphia Inquirer*, same day

(thanks to James Sanzare, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

SHEVARDNADZE SCHMOOZE

PRESIDENT REAGAN is great at chitchat. His icebreaker at lunch with Eduard Shevardnadze, the Soviet foreign minister, on September 15 was about farming. He said either "I am a farmer" or "I come from farm country," depending on which aide's account you believe. Whichever way, Reagan was suggesting a degree of agricultural expertise he doesn't have. Frank Carlucci, the national security adviser, practically spilled his bowl of soup when he heard this. Reagan followed it up with a query: Tell me about Soviet agricultural reforms. Shevardnadze was more than willing to hold forth. Vice President George Bush also had a few things to say, noting that he had gotten involved in agricultural issues lately. And so it went—90 minutes of mostly happy talk—in the State Dining Room.

It was an odd prelude to one of the most important achievements of Reagan's presidency, an agreement "in principle" with the Soviets to eliminate all intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe and elsewhere. Three days after the lunch, Reagan matter-of-factly told reporters in the White House press room his "zero option" had succeeded. "I am pleased to note that agreement in principles was reached to conclude the INF treaty," he said. Perhaps he was restrained because the treaty isn't signed yet (verification provisions must be worked out in October in Moscow) and already four of the six Republican presidential candidates are opposed and a fifth lukewarm. Reagan used slightly bolder language in his speech to the U.N. General Assembly September 21, calling it "a truly historic treaty that will eliminate an entire class of U.S. and Soviet nuclear weapons." But he quickly skipped on to other subjects.

Reagan has grounds to crow. His brand of arms control—give the Soviets a real incentive to reduce their nuclear arsenal and then wait for them to come around—has been vindicated. He deployed Pershing II and ground-

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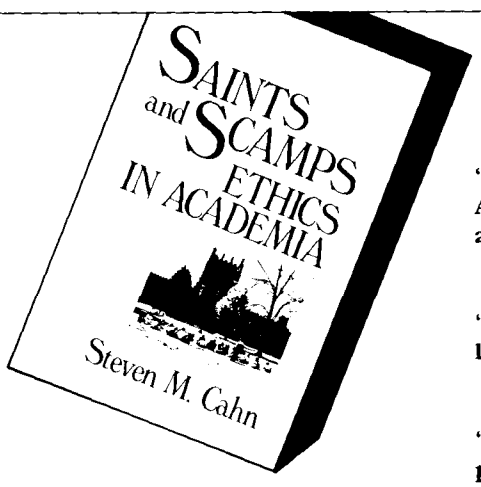
launched cruise missiles (GLCM) in Europe as a bargaining chip. He built up, rather than offering new concessions, to prod the Soviets to agree to remove their 441 SS-20 missiles aimed mostly at Western Europe. Now they've agreed. But Reagan had to be extraordinarily patient and thick-skinned to get to this point. He had to rebuff faint hearts in his own State Department who, from the moment the zero option was unveiled in November 1981, wanted to settle for less than total elimination of intermediate-range missiles. They would have had the president signal the proposal wasn't take it or leave it, hardly an effective negotiating tactic. Later they would have allowed 140 missiles on each side. This summer they would have permitted the Soviets 100 missiles in Asia. Reagan, backed by Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and his assistant Richard Perle, held to the zero option. Patience paid off.

The Soviets were no treat to deal with. Their initial position was to call the zero option totally unacceptable. When the first Pershing IIs were deployed in 1983, they stormed out of the arms control talks in Geneva. Reagan took heat from Democrats for that, and he took more when he turned down a string of Soviet counteroffers. First the Soviets said British and French nukes had to be included in any treaty. Then they said a treaty on intermediate weapons had to be tied to another pact restricting development of Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative. Later the Soviets insisted on retaining the 100 SS-20s in Asia. Reagan rejected all these, and the Soviets abandoned them.

That the Soviets will back down if you're patient is but one of the conclusions to be drawn from Reagan's INF success. President Carter dropped his strategic arms proposal in 1977 six weeks after the Soviets initially turned it down. Reagan stuck to the zero option for six years. "We held on to this proposal longer than we've ever held on to one before," says Perle, who dreamed up the zero option while a Pentagon official and now is at the American Enterprise Institute. Another conclusion is that you can't know if a proposal dubbed unacceptable or non-negotiable actually is until you propose it. "If you drive a hard bargain, you get good results," says Perle. One final conclusion: you may have to build up to build down. Had Reagan not deployed the Pershing IIs and GLCMs, the Soviets wouldn't have agreed to give up their SS-20s (with better than three times the number of warheads) and brought us to the brink of the first nuclear arms reductions.

The downside to the INF treaty—the Soviet advantage in conventional forces in Europe—isn't taken seriously at the White House. Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger declared last spring that with the Pershing IIs gone, the Soviets will be free to wage conventional war. Not quite. The United States still will have some 4,000 nuclear weapons based in Europe. And to the extent that Europeans become anxious about the troop and tank imbalance, that's good, argues Perle. Maybe this way the Europeans, who spend four percent of their GNP on defense compared with 6.5 percent by the United States, will be prompted to do



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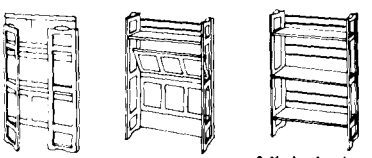

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something, instead of merely whining.

Shevardnadze, who's not a bubbly guy, was in an unusually amiable mood for the talks in Washington. Perhaps the thought of the INF pact cheered him, or perhaps it was the thought of what the treaty might lead to. He told jokes at lunch with Reagan, laughing uproariously at his own humor, even though the Americans, including Reagan, didn't catch on. He also talked in friendly fashion about touchy subjects, such as the Krasnoyarsk radar site that the Reagan administration has labeled a violation of the 1972 ABM Treaty. Well, Shevardnadze said, he'd wondered about Krasnoyarsk himself. So he summoned military officials, who assured him it wasn't a violation. Still, why not have Weinberger come to Moscow to discuss the matter with the Soviet defense minister? Weinberger took umbrage at this, saying he'd tried to set up a talk with the defense chief two years ago. "He didn't return my call," Weinberger said. "We've got a new one now," shot back Shevardnadze.

AT THE WHITE HOUSE, Shevardnadze delivered a friendly letter to Reagan from Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, who has an ulterior motive. Perle says Gorbachev has gone along with the INF treaty to clear the way for a strategic agreement that stymies SDI. Shevardnadze brought a new proposal with him that offered a choice between two ways of limiting SDI field testing. Either one would put a crimp in development of SDI, so Weinberger is strongly opposed. His fear is not that Reagan will be caught up in the logic of the INF agreement and decide SDI is the perfect bargaining chip to exchange for reductions in strategic missiles. Rather, he worries that Reagan might become convinced that limits on testing won't really deter the SDI program.

For now, Reagan sounds resolute. When a group of conservative activists met with Reagan for 70 minutes on September 22, he vowed, "I'm not going to sell out SDI. I'm not going to trade it for anything." But when James Hackett of the Heritage Foundation said conservatives want a deployment program, not a research program, to rally around, Reagan balked. He wouldn't commit to near-term deployment, and the conservatives came away less than satisfied.

Reagan keeps them guessing about his attitude toward the Soviets too. Is he too eager to reach arms agreements? A fresh stream of anti-Soviet talk by Reagan suggests not. In a speech on September 16, while Shevardnadze was in Washington, Reagan said he's "a collector of stories that citizens of the Soviet Union tell among themselves . . . and just yesterday I added a new one to the collection." Seems a cabdriver told a visitor that a building was the tallest in Moscow. Huh? the visitor exclaimed. That building is only two stories tall. Yes, the cabbie responded, but you can see all the way to Siberia from it. It's KGB headquarters. On September 25, he told another joke. How do you tell who's a communist? It's someone who reads Marx and Lenin. How do you tell who's an anti-communist? It's someone who understands Marx and Lenin.

That's Reagan's hard-nosed side. The other side is more ethereal. He muses about taking Gorbachev on a helicopter trip over shopping centers and backyard swimming pools, and telling the Soviet leader that these are what working people have in the United States. Near the end of his lunch with Shevardnadze, Reagan wondered aloud what would happen if the world faced an "alien threat" from outer space. "Don't you think the United States and the Soviet Union would be together?" he asked. Shevardnadze said yes, absolutely. "And we wouldn't need our defense ministers to meet," he added.

FRED BARNES

End of the World, Part III.

THE BORK SCREW

"In my defensive research of Bork I have discovered a compulsive insistence on the letter of the law. . . ." —Robert Rauschenberg, artist, September 22, 1987

As anti-Bork hysteria goes, Rauschenberg's was moderate. Apart from the Supreme Court nominee's worrying legalism, Rauschenberg's only other concern was the fate of human civilization: "The Supreme Court is a final discriminating force to guide us into the future of global concerns." What he failed to mention, of course, were the fetus funerals. According to Planned Parenthood's media package, if Judge Bork is nominated, there'll be no end to the little coffins. People for the American Way restricted itself to the slightly worrying chance that the day after Bork gets on the Court, mass sterilizations could be imposed. Their ads begin: "The nomination of Robert Bork . . . has caused a lot of controversy. And has a lot of people worried. With good reason." (Note the crescendo.) "But don't take our word for it. You be the judge . . . STERILIZING WORKERS . . . BILLING CONSUMERS FOR POWER THEY NEVER GOT . . . NO PRIVACY . . . TURN THE CLOCK BACK ON CIVIL RIGHTS? . . . NO DAY IN COURT . . ." In a complex summary of the constitutional arguments behind the carefully selected cases, the ad's climax hardly leaves the reader dangling in philosophic midair: "Judge Bork has consistently ruled against the interests of people." Anyone for animal rights?

There is a serious case to be made against Bork, but so far in the media blitz, you're not likely to have heard it. This time round, the liberals get the prize for hype, even if it's only because the conservatives gave themselves the ridiculous handicap of defending an innocuous moderate. If you'd naively planned on a sex life after Bork, Planned Parenthood had news for you: "Robert Bork's Position on Reproductive Rights? YOU DON'T HAVE ANY." In another flyer, they added: "STATE-CONTROLLED PREGNANCY? It's not as farfetched as it sounds." Carrying Bork's position to its logical end, "states could . . . impose family quotas for population purposes, make abortion a crime, or sterilize anyone they choose." And senators wonder why

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the polls show a drift away from the Bork nomination. It's the genital gap.

The disingenuousness of the Bork-hate campaign has been sustained by a variety of tactics. Some have relied on good old-fashioned lying. The National Women's Law Center, followed swiftly by the Feminist Men's Alliance, claimed that Bork testified before Congress in favor of the Human Life Act, when in fact he did the opposite. There were leaks of FBI records detailing Bork's two 1983 emergency room admissions after minor accidents with relatively high levels of alcohol in his blood. Americans United for the Separation of Church and State began their direct mail with the line: "Frankly, I'm scared." The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights sent out an EMERGENCY ALERT flyer. Ralph Nader's personal letters predicted a "plague on the next generation." NOW's president-elect restricted herself to calling Bork a "neanderthal."

THERE'S A QUICK and easy way to manipulate a Bork case. Take the National Women's Law Center's citing of *Vinson* v. *Taylor*. A sexual harassment suit, it's useful for implying that Bork is sexist, against civil rights, and out of line with the rest of the Supreme Court, because it involved legal questions about the role of "voluntariness" in a defendant's giving in to sexual advances. In fact Bork was not involved in the original case at all, but in a third rehearing over whether there were unresolved questions of law that demanded another rehearing. His dissent was in favor of a rehearing, an opinion upheld by the Supreme Court when they decided to judge the case themselves. But this is both boring and accurate, and too laborious for TV.

Statistics also come in handy for Bork-baiting. A numbers game is central to the Public Citizen Litigation Committee's report. The approach is simple: focus on results and ignore the judicial process. This makes for a damning list of accusations: "Judge Bork's performance on the D.C. Circuit is not explained by . . . judicial restraint; in split cases, one can predict his vote with almost complete accuracy simply by identifying the parties in the case. . . . [He] voted against consumers . . . almost 100 percent of the time and for business in every case."

The real crunch is in the small print. By only considering split cases, the report rules out most of the cases in which Bork played a part and the vast majority of his opinions. More important, split cases don't necessarily mean much. They needn't turn on important legal principles, and can often rest on the random composition of panels, or an abstruse legal technicality. But you wouldn't guess it from the report, which implies that every anti-labor ruling is ipso facto proof that Bork ideologically favors big business. In fact, as the right-wing Center for Judicial Studies pointed out, if you count all the cases, Bork voted seven times in favor of the employee and seven times against. But that doesn't prove anything either. You just can't tell what's really at stake without a blow-by-blow account of the opinions. And no one can stay awake that long.

Bork's nerdy instincts make the whole process even more excruciating. In a typically pedantic Bork labor law ruling, the case rested on whether a structure on a building site should be termed a "runway" or a "platform," hardly a decision requiring great ideological fervor. Still, People for the American Way was able to run the split-decision statistics as if they applied to every case Bork considered. The heading was: "BIG BUSINESS IS ALWAYS RIGHT." All that was needed was a hypothetical case where fetus coffin-makers screwed over some single mother on a "runway" who couldn't make it to court. You can usually work in Bork somewhere.

Then again, if you're Bob Rauschenberg, you don't even have to do that. The ultimate anti-Bork tactic is irrelevance: "Democracy is not the product of law," Rauschenberg revealed, "democracy is the need of people to be free in dreams and reality." Dreams *and* reality? Wait, there's more: "Socrates and Plato, as seen on TV yesterday, are an 'in accord' [sic] disagreement for their time, but are no more than history." How's that again? "If this country is to remain the enviable land of growth and promise, that is what has to be gardened. Jurisdictional responsibilities begin before law." As Senator Edward Kennedy put it: "I have had the opportunity to read your testimony. It is just superb."

And he should know. His public statements have revealed a staggering desire to avoid legal or judicial philosophy, as well as a penchant for hype:

> Robert Bork's America is a land in which women would be forced into back-alley abortions, blacks would sit at segregated lunch counters, rogue police could break down citizens' doors in midnight raids . . . and the doors of the federal courts would be shut on millions of citizens.

He opened his questioning on the subject of compulsory abortions, greeting Bork's occasional attempts to raise particular cases with a constant: "I was basically interested, rather than getting into the cases, just to get at the rationale . . ." In one of the more rambling passages of the hearings, in a reference to "other civilizations," he spent four minutes talking about book burnings without any reference to Bork's First Amendment decisions, or any other decisions for that matter: "The first book-burnings was [sic] the Bible I understand . . ." Throughout the hearings, he went for the Phil Donahue profundity "What I hear you saying is . . . ," paraphrasing a parody of Bork's apparent views, regardless of Bork's testimony, just for the camera. Ollie North would have been proud of him.

At one point in the increasingly irrelevant hearings, the novelist William Styron reflected on what he called a "fantasy scenario" in which philistinism could be foisted upon the American people by a radical justice. One less than fantasy scenario is that the Bork nomination will be defeated not on the merits of the case, nor on the debate in the Senate, but by special interest-group hysteria. The only nominee who in the future will be able to survive the demagoguery will be someone who can respond in kind. Some of Bork's opponents may soon run the risk of getting the Supreme Court justice they deserve.

ANDREW SULLIVAN

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The Democratic buffoon-in-chief.

HAMALOT

THE ELECT AND THE ELECTED, Robert Lowell said in "Washington in Spring," come here bright as dimes, and stay until they are soft and disheveled. As if acting out the line, there was Edward Moore Kennedy on the Senate Judiciary Committee, conjuring feelings of sympathy and support for Judge Bork every time he intervened. There is hardly a personal tragedy in the husk that he has so patently become, because there never was enough of a nut inside it for even a squirrel to nibble on. But the unthinking rodomontade with which he utters worn-out, supposedly liberal, platitudes does as much to remind the American people that the Democratic Party may be stuck in the dark ages as the rest of its lackluster, flabby spokesmen put together.

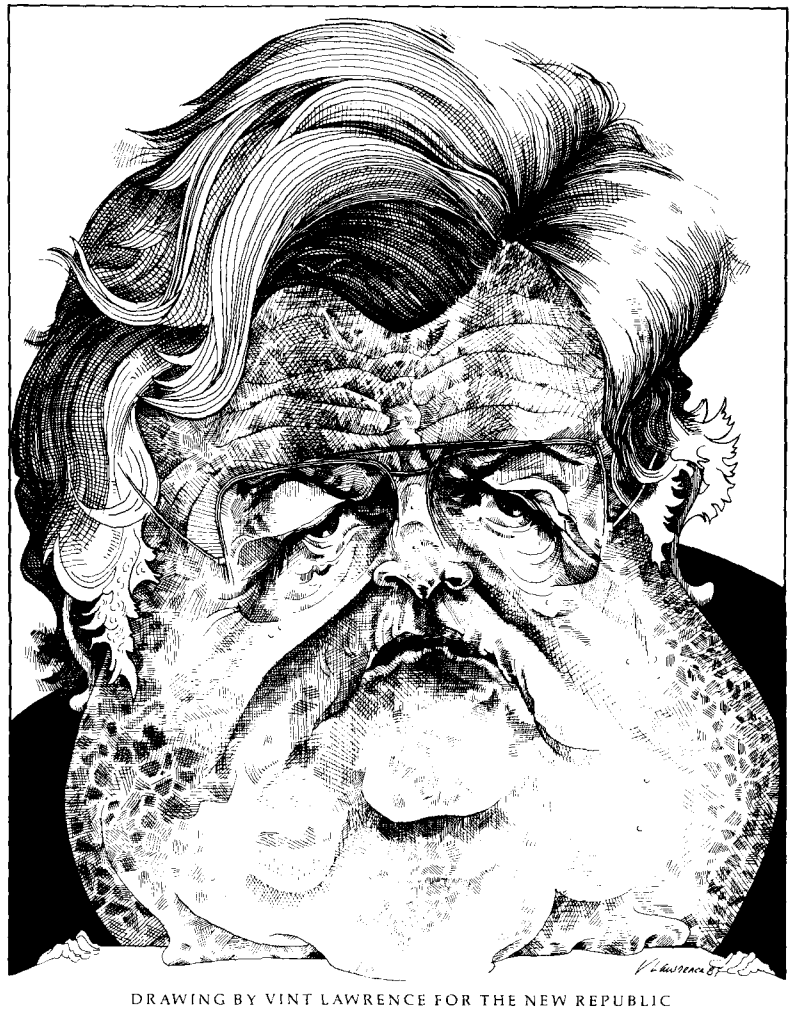
Kennedy makes even the "good causes" sound hollow. Those who are anxious that the Democratic Party should recover some sense of the time and world in which it must now act ought not to soften their criticisms of him. It is partly due to the example set by Kennedy and his shallow, smart-ass aides, with their sheen of cleverness, that liberalism is in its current state. Kennedy has the gift of making people wish the poor he appears to champion would get lost—and the homeless, and the hungry, the oppressed and the weary, and the peasants in the Third World, into whose rice bowls he pours the pottage of his bluster. The real point in the almost overnight subsidence of Joe Biden is not only that there never was anything but tepid air in that balloon, which shriveled at the first prick. It's that the Democratic Party seems determined to go on hoping to survive by plagiarizing its own past.

If he had lived, John F. Kennedy would have been 70 this year. The fact that it is impossible to visualize JFK as a septuagenarian is a tribute to the energy with which, even if it was only out of ambition, he occupied the present, and so made it possible to imagine a future that also could be occupied. Even those of us who have been severe critics of much of JFK's manner of governing can recognize, as many of his close acquaintances and supporters themselves say, that he grew by leaps and bounds as he moved from the House to the Senate to the threshold of the presidency, and then into the White House itself. Although he was pushed forward by his father, one can point almost to the moment in the 1960 campaign when he refused to be stuck where his father remained. He almost literally cut the cord binding him to his father's influence. But Edward Kennedy in 25 years in the Senate has shown no sign of growth.

The tragedy and the offense do not lie in him personally, but in the awesome rise of the Kennedy clan to the status of almost the royal family of the world, and its no less rapid decline into irrelevance. Edward Kennedy, trailing the clouds of glory from his elder brothers, has enough presence and aura to anchor the Democratic Party to a withered environment, a lunar landscape, in which it can find no sustenance, and offer none to the ordinary Americans who would dearly like to be able to vote for it again.

For all his self-advertised care for the poor of the world—his global, globular, empty compassion—Edward Kennedy is, as he appeared in the Bork hearings, an overfed, middle-aged yuppie, whose dewlaps flap when he recites the incantations pressed into his hands by his aides. It is hard to recall any other celebrated politician, on either side of the Atlantic, who has ever spoken so much, so tritely, with so little evidence that any wheels are turning inside his skull. Kennedy beats his big brass drum, and every time not only the lamb's-wool heads of the sticks but his fists go through the hide. At least Robert Kennedy was alarming enough to be feared. But Edward Kennedy? Who's afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?

He is always crying "Wolf!"—and no one jumps up and goes to his rescue or, more important, to the rescue of the downtrodden, on whose ills he rides as if they were his beasts of burden. Every image that the Democrats have to



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

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overcome—that they overtax the Middle Americans, try to meet social problems only with a proliferation of programs, are the junior partners of vociferous but marginal interest groups, look too carelessly at the credentials of the Third World movements and leaders, and neglect the security of the nation and of the free world—is kept alive by this buffoon.

HENRY FAIRLIE

B.S. at business school.

ETHICS FOR GREEDHEADS

HOW WOULD YOU EXPECT a conservative Republican to respond to a problem involving "values"? Throw money at it? Probably not. Yet this is exactly how staunch Reaganite John Shad, former SEC chairman and current ambassador to the Netherlands, has reacted to the uproar over insider trading. "Disturbed" by "the large numbers of graduates of leading business schools who have become convicted felons," Shad has given $30 million to the Harvard Business School—his, and many of the felons', alma mater.

Most large alumni donations pay for the buildings or libraries or laboratories. Shad's pledge is for something intangible—ethical graduates—and it isn't clear what dollars, even 30 million of them, can buy to this end. Was it a failure to take the appropriate course in business school that led Martin Siegel to the Brooklyn Bridge at midnight to receive a cash payoff?

Neither Harvard nor Shad has disclosed in detail how the money will be spent. What little they have mentioned so far is either depressingly familiar ("interdepartmental programs" and "research projects") or just silly (a video archive of "outstanding management practices" and an annual awards ceremony).

While doubts about corporate scruples were rampant in the '60s, more recently such attitudes have become passé. Entrepreneurs are our pop icons, and administration officials wear ties featuring little profiles of Adam Smith. On the Harvard Business School campus, where I lived last year (though not as a business student), I was surprised at how much it resembled not a college but a modern company, with all that implies. The architecture of most buildings runs toward corporate rather than Ivy, slick and antiseptic rather than run-down and tweedy. Every morning the foyer of our building was carpeted with freshly delivered *Wall Street Journal*s. Magazines would arrive spanning the gamut from *Forbes* to *Fortune*, with someone's solitary *New York Review of Books* looking quite out of place. Students mill around wearing expensive variants on the preppy uniform, looking and acting like clones of Michael J. Fox. The talk is always of money.

Second-year students discuss their job interviews—in business school an elaborate mating ritual. It starts with a series of formal dinners at posh hotels, and continues with a battery of interviews at corporate headquarters. These are followed by more intimate dinners at fancy restaurants. (Official three-day weekends and three separate spring vacations give second-year students ample time to spend with their corporate suitors.) Each firm repeats this process more than once, and each student interviews with several firms. Even the professors who teach morals—"ethicists"—consult frequently, and for high fees, with these same companies. This, along with the material ambition of the self-selected student body, creates an atmosphere where ideas are not the dominant currency at all. The dominant currency is, well, currency.

This does not mean that schools are not obsessed with their role as the training ground for America's future elite, ethics included. Thomas Piper, associate dean of Harvard Business School, explained that one of the moving forces behind all major business schools' recent efforts is their graduates need of "a heightened understanding of morals for their exercise of power." Harvard cites, among courses dealing with ethical issues, one on "Power." (You've seen the movie, now take the course.) Students don't read Machiavelli or C. Wright Mills. Instead, they are introduced to the issues with a discussion of David Rockefeller. The "required reading" is a gushing documentary by Bill Moyers. A participant tells how students wonder in hushed tones about the source of Rockefeller's influence (but the word "inheritance" is not mentioned once), while those who have actually met Him describe to their classmates how his handshake radiates pure power. Next week: Tip O'Neill.

EFFORTS TO TEACH ethics come either packaged in courses labeled as such or as ethical questions integrated into the general curriculum. Stanford Business School advocates the former, and a separate ethics course is now part of its required core. In most special ethics courses, business students consider corporate situations fraught with moral possibilities and are asked how they would conduct themselves. (Hint: giving a bribe is the wrong answer.) Paul MacAvoy, dean of the Rochester Management School, is opposed to the Stanford approach, arguing that "to elevate [ethics] to a separate course is to make it an abstraction." The Wharton School agrees, concluding in a study that students often regard ethics professors as out of touch with the actual business world. Further, "Students wear their ethical hats" in Ethics, only to take it off in say, Finance.

Harvard is moving toward integrating ethics into all its courses. Dean John MacArthur says: "Ethical issues . . . have to permeate all aspects of our work. They have to be imbedded in the very fabric of what we teach at Harvard Business School." The case is strong; adding a few special courses seems the easy solution, integration the difficult but correct one. But integration has its problems as well,

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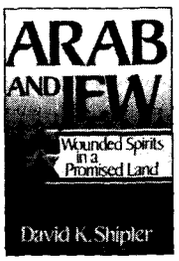

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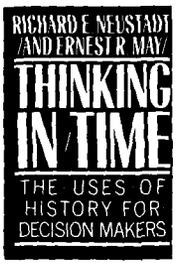

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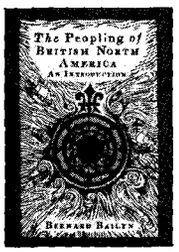

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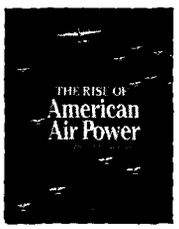

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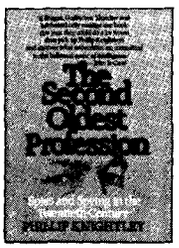

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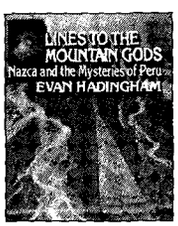

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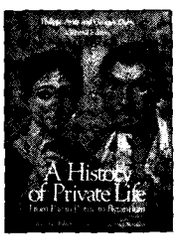

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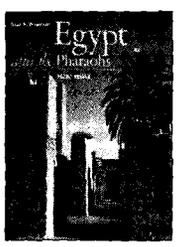

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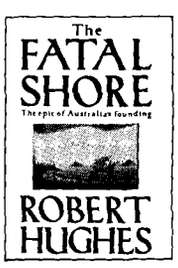

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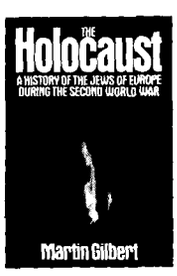

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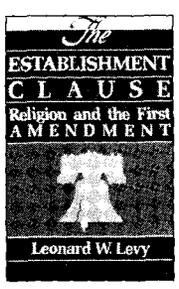

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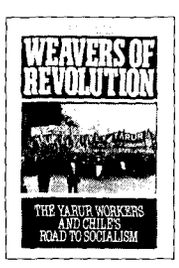

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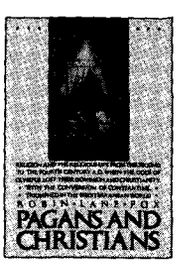

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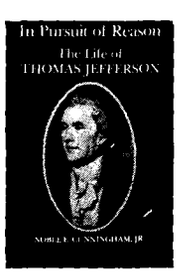

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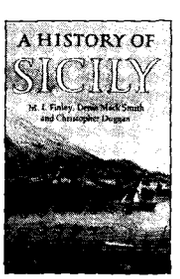

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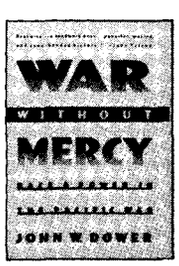

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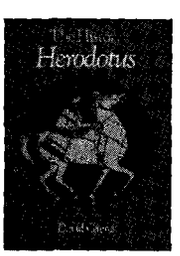

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first as a cover for doing nothing. Business schools have responded to calls for new ethics courses by claiming that ethics had already *been* imbedded into the fabric. And integration can mean as little as asking the same simpleminded question about bribes for a few minutes in all classes, instead of all the time in one class. What's to say that a professor of, say, Statistics has either the inclination or the expertise to teach moral philosophy?

The case study method, long the pride of business schools, is particularly ill-suited to the teaching of ethics. Almost no books are used, and little history or theory is taught. Course work consists of reading prepared pamphlets on specific problems particular companies once faced, whether or not they stand for any overarching principle.

IN FACT, it doesn't matter *how* you teach ethics, if what you are teaching is muddled. In business school, ethics is taught as a matter not of morality but of pragmatism. Consider a course that takes off from Shad's belief, in his words, that "crime doesn't pay." This approach tries to convince students that, if they factor in the costs of getting caught, they would see the folly of doing the wrong thing and therefore would not do it. But crimes are committed precisely because the offender thinks he will not be caught (especially if his wrongdoing is buried in a maze of stock transactions). Pragmatism may be the only language MBAs understand, but it misses the point that crime is wrong even though you are not likely to be caught.

Another technique is to make a student calculate the consequences of his actions for other people. Kirk Hanson, who developed Stanford's business ethics program, says, "We must weigh the costs and benefits to all parties affected by our decision." This is generous but unrealistic. Although capitalism is not a zero-sum game, competition does lie at the heart of a free-enterprise system. A firm does not, and should not, consider the potential loss to every competitor as a restraint on its actions. The market as encounter group may be nice, but it wouldn't be very efficient.

The pragmatic approach, aside from abandoning morality altogether, assumes people make rational calculations before doing something unethical, and that behind wrong choices lies misinformation or shoddy thinking. Hanson says, "Unethical behavior occurs mainly because business managers do not understand the situations in which they find themselves." This kind of thinking naturally leads designers of the ethics curriculum to focus on the crime of the moment. In the 1970s, for example, the propriety of bribing foreign officials was the subject of much contention; insider trading was not discussed at all. Who can tell what the moral lapses of the 1990s will be?

There will always be moral gray areas in business, and MBAs are probably better off for having thought about these issues. But it's not the shadings of misleading advertising that Shad and his $30 million are aimed at but cold hard cash changing hands. That a course in ethics could prevent that—by itself, integrated, part of the case study method, or as an adjunct to a course in Power—is a hopeless goal. By the time they arrive at business school, students are a bit old for basic character formation.

Given this limitation, the best approach might be to teach business not simply as an acquisitive trade but as a profession with duties and responsibilities. Law and medical schools create an atmosphere in which students see their fields as noble and themselves as socially useful. (Consider the lawyer's quite sincere belief that he must defend the guilty.) If business schools stood for the proposition that business is an honorable endeavor, and that businessmen are socially useful, students could learn to take pride in their profession and, conversely, feel ashamed to let it down. That is how these schools can marginally influence the behavior of their 26-year-old charges (which is probably the limit of their moral influence).

This does imply a moral defense capitalism, obviously a controversial position for business schools to take. But, as the Critical Legal Studies group has pointed out, the argument that our legal system is a beneficial one is equally tendentious, and yet it may well help to make better-behaved lawyers. Ironically, professional "ethicists" sometimes object to taking any such definitive moral stance at all. In the words of Wharton's Thomas Murfee, "Ethics properly taught is no more value-laden than any other subject . . ." But by shying away from an advocacy of the free market, business schools are refusing to defend themselves. If capitalism is morally neutral, the schools are at best self-interested corporations that identify a need for a product (MBAs) and make a morally neutral decision to produce it. If capitalism is unambiguously good, they are educating an integral part of a prosperous and just society. Which sounds better?

FAREED ZAKARIA

The ethical case against the draft.

MERCENARY MORALITY

SUPPORT FOR conscription is on the rise, but the newest advocates of involuntary military service are Democratic politicians, not all of them especially hawkish, rather than war-hungry generals. The arguments they make are based on what they see as important social values, rather than in terms of military needs or efficiency. Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sam Nunn thinks the draft should never have been abandoned. South Carolina's Fritz Hollings regularly introduces legislation to reinstitute conscription. Former Virginia Governor Charles Robb and Representative David McCurdy, Democrat of Oklahoma, also favor a return to the draft. Even Senator

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Paul Simon, perhaps the most unabashed liberal among the Democratic presidential contenders, supports mandatory military service as part of a universal national service program.

This liberal enthusiasm for conscription comes at a time when the volunteer military's success is undisputed. Recruits today are better educated and score higher on Pentagon tests than do civilian youths. Discipline and morale are superior to that of the draft era. Military officers once led the chorus for a return to conscription, but now the Army chief of staff, Gen. John Wickham, says that today's soldiers "are the best in my 33 years of service. They'll fight, and they are as patriotic as you and I. They follow orders, and they die."

Long perceived to be soft on defense, some Democrats see the draft as a cheap way to appear pro-military. Others view the volunteer military as an unseemly affair that entrusts the common defense to "mercenaries." The system is also thought to be unrepresentative, allowing the rich and middle class to escape their civic duty. Simon complains, "We are relying excessively on the poor of this country."

THESE ISSUES are more interesting than sterile debates over recruit quality backed by tables of Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) scores. But soldier competence relates to the basic purpose of a military—its ability to fight—in a way that "representativeness" and "civic obligation" do not. In fact, manipulating the armed services for ill-defined social objectives would make the military less able to do its job. The sort of military desired by most conscription advocates would be dumber, less well educated, and more poorly motivated.

But draft supporters really don't believe their rhetoric. While they wax eloquent over the citizenship obligation of young men, they fall strangely silent when it comes to the duty of women, 30-year-old investment bankers, and 50-year-old congressmen. National defense presumably benefits everyone, so why don't we all have an equal obligation to serve? Eighteen-year-old males aren't the only ones who can be cooks, mechanics, and support personnel.

In contrast, the volunteer military exacts a contribution for the common defense from everyone, but it does so in a way more consistent with this nation's basic principles: taxation. A volunteer military financed by a universal taxation—a far less intrusive and destructive form of coercion than conscription—spreads the defense obligation to every member of society. Indeed, the progressive income tax imposes the highest defense cost on those who, by one measure at least, have the most at stake. As Nicholas von Hoffman once put it, "Draft old men's money, not young men's bodies."

Is there still something wrong with relying on dirty mammon to hire soldiers? The question is bizarre on its face: America has never drafted its officer corps and career enlisted force. Even conscription advocates support increased compensation to help retain skilled service personnel. Can anyone seriously object to paying a living wage to combat grunts—some of whom qualified for food stamps in the late 1970s—when generals earn $72,500 a year? Yet the built-in logic of a draft army is that soldiers will be paid less than it would take to attract them in the free market. After all, if the pay is good enough to fill the ranks with volunteers, there will be no place to put the draftees.

A volunteer military relies on patriotism as well as cash to sign up new enlistees. Surveys consistently show that the desire to serve the country is among the most important reasons recruits join; enlistments actually rise after traumatic events such as the bombing of the Marine barracks in Lebanon. In contrast, the draft completely ignores people's patriotic feelings, relying instead on the threat of jail to meet recruiting quotas. Conscripts—or slaves, if volunteers can be called mercenaries—are pressed into service irrespective of their devotion to the nation. And if the choice is between mercenaries who want to be in the foxhole and slaves who don't, the decision shouldn't be hard to make. A volunteer military simply pays a decent wage to its members, ensuring that those who most want to defend their country don't have to accept food stamps to make ends meet.

SIMON'S CRITICISM still remains, however. In relying on free choice to fill the military's ranks, are we making the poor and minorities carry the bulk of the defense burden for a society in which they share few of the benefits? In fact, we aren't. The All-Volunteer Force (AVF) is roughly representative of society as a whole. But even if the poor were grossly overrepresented in the military, how could that justify a draft to reorder things? After all, a draft will mean one of two things for those now serving in the military as volunteers. Either (*a*) they will still be serving, as volunteers or as draftees, only for less pay in either case; or (*b*) they will not be serving when, for more money, they would have chosen to do so. Replacing the AVF with a draft doesn't increase opportunities for the poor; it only eliminates one option they might otherwise wish to take.

Another problem: the military just doesn't need the services of every 18-year-old American male. The annual demand for roughly 334,000 new recruits could be met by taking about one out of every five. Lowering pay enough to eliminate anybody's wish to volunteer and then filling the entire quota through a draft lottery would make the armed services slightly dumber on average than they are now, but arguably more "representative." And yet four out of five youths would still escape this would-be mandatory patriotic duty.

Of course, the government could be "fair" by taking all 1.6 million 18-year-old males. Since draftees serve two-year terms, there'd be 3.2 million young men to keep busy. Some versions of the Democratic draft envision a broader kind of national service, where draftees could choose among soldiering, teaching, raking leaves, etc. But the cost of administering any such program would be phenomenal—all the while forcing both the draftees and the volunteers they replace to work at jobs they wouldn't choose, and for less money than they would otherwise get. And all

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to what end? To rejuggle slightly the racial and socioeconomic complexion of the first-term military force, which constitutes less than one-third of the military.

But the volunteer military is already broadly representative of mainstream America. Nearly all officers have a college degree and both career enlisted men and officers are solidly in the middle class. Even new recruits are better educated than the population they are defending. Last year 91 percent of Army first-termers were high school graduates—the best measure of likely service success—compared with only 75 percent of civilian youth. New enlistees are less likely than average to have attended college, but that results in large part from recruiting efforts that focus on 18-year-olds.

And, based on SAT scores, military recruits are generally as capable of attending college as civilian youths. The AFQT test provides even more impressive evidence on this point: last year the military accepted just four percent of military recruits scoring in the bottom two categories, even though nearly one-third of civilian youths fall into those two groups. Surveys have also found the socioeconomic backgrounds of military recruits and civilian young people to be similar. Their parents' educational attainments are remarkably close, and the occupations of recruits' families are only slightly more blue collar. In short, the best of middle America is choosing military service over college.

What about the overrepresentation of blacks? Last year 15 percent of the 18- to 24-year-old population was black, compared with 19 percent of new enlistees and 22 percent of Army first-termers. However, the black share of Army enlistments has been falling and is close to where it was when the volunteer military was inaugurated in 1973. Anyway, no one has demonstrated any harm from the high level of black enlistments—not to the military and certainly not to the black volunteers. After all, they're qualified and perform well. And to the extent that they've joined because they believe the military offers them an opportunity to succeed, they're right. Sociologist Charles Moskos observes, "Blacks occupy more management positions in the military than they do in business, education, journalism, government, or any other significant sector of American society."

Sometimes the new draft supporters even admit that one part of their thinking is that a draft will save a few billion in the cost of defense. Universal service, of course, far from saving money, would cost untold billions. Even a selective lottery might well end up costing money, even though pay-per-soldier could be dramatically lowered. Most service pay goes to careerists, retirees, and civilians, and therefore wouldn't be cut. Conscription raises training expenses since draftees serve shorter terms and re-enlist in fewer numbers. A recent Pentagon study figured a draft would cost as much as $2.5 billion more than today's AVF.

More to the point, even if a few billion could be saved, this wouldn't reduce the burden of defense so much as redistribute it—from the broad spectrum of American taxpayers onto the backs of a few 18-year-olds. What social values would truly be served by such an exercise?

DOUG BANDOW

Doug Bandow is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute. He was on the staff of President Reagan's Military Manpower Task Force while a special assistant in the White House.

The Hill's new influence-peddling epidemic.

THE AIDES VIRUS

JEFFREY L. PASLEY

PITY THE POOR congressional aide. Having dropped tens of thousands on a liberal arts college and an Ivy League law school, he still didn't know what to do with his life. So he moved to Washington, along with countless other overeducated and directionless people. He took a job on Capitol Hill, where he could rub shoulders with one of the powerful for five minutes a day and make much more money than his friends who were research assistants and cub reporters. Maybe he even got to work for someone or some cause he believed in. After a few years he was making $40,000 or $50,000, and he found himself a "key player" in one or two legislative battles. Well-heeled lobbyists sought him out, reporters begged him for information, and constituents asked him for favors.

But the thrill was temporary. By the time he was 35, he was nearing the top of the congressional pay scale. He wanted to take Italian vacations, keep his kids out of public schools, and buy a house in Chevy Chase. He was tired of working 60-hour weeks, of being at the beck and call of, giving all the credit to, and taking all the blame for someone who (truth to tell) was not as intelligent as himself. Most of all he chafed at what political scientist Michael Malbin has called "the knowledge that however powerful they may appear, or however often they turned their own

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opinions into laws, they will never be anything other than surrogates for someone else."

He wanted out. Where could he go? He knew how to call other staff people, crank out press releases, and draft bills that hid his member's pet projects. How many law firms back home wanted an aging lawyer who had never tried a case?

But maybe someone did want him. Every once in a while, the lobbyists who called him each day allowed as how with his expertise he would make a great addition to their firm's Washington office. And so, eventually, he succumbed.

This tale doesn't reflect the career of every congressional aide. The vast majority of the 19,000 or so Capitol Hill staffers answer phones, operate computers, and write letters to constituents. After a few years, most of them go to graduate or law school or return to their previous careers. But for those who reach the top of the congressional pay scale, the administrative assistants and staff directors and committee counsels, there is often no going back. They end up working for someone who values their particular abilities—in other words, someone who will pay them to influence Congress.

IN 1986 the spectacular fall of White-House-aide-turned-lobbyist Michael Deaver made the Washington influence industry look bad. The passage of tax reform over the objections of just about every corporate lobbyist in the capital made the industry look weak. What to do? Obviously lobbying firms and trade associations needed people who could wield influence while staying out of the morning papers. As it happens, there is a pool of thousands of workers who are trained to do just that. Former congressional aides make up a growing proportion of the influence-peddling rank and file, and some of the higher echelons as well.

In fact, Hill aides make more effective lobbyists than former executive branch officials. Unlike high-profile White House aides, an influential Hill staffer may be well-known among members of Congress and—even more important—among other Hill staffers, but obscure to the press and the public. More important, contacts on the Hill can be far more useful than contacts at the White House in the day-to-day business of getting a client's wishes turned into national policy. Most issues that concern businesses and foreign governments—a military contract, a tax loophole, a specific trade provision—are of minor importance to the White House, but they can be of major importance to a senator on a certain committee or a House member with a particular company in her district.

So congressional aides routinely switch sides and go to work as lobbyists, or "legislative counsels," or "legislative specialists." One can follow this process weekly in the back pages of *National Journal* and *Roll Call*, where Hill staff changes are chronicled. In a typical entry, a January *National Journal* reported tersely that Pamela J. Garvie, former counsel to three different Senate Commerce subcommittees, including the panels on Aviation and Ground Transportation, would become "of counsel" at the law firm Baker and Hostetler. The accompanying photograph shows a beaming Garvie, holding models of a tractor-trailer and an airliner. As of July, she had registered to lobby for Burlington Northern Railroad and Alamo Rent-a-Car.

"Where else do you go when you leave government?" asks Joe Dowley, who as chief counsel to the House Ways and Means Committee helped write the tax reform bill and who joined the law and lobbying firm Dewey, Ballantine, Bushby, Palmer & Wood the spring after it passed. "You go to the private sector. It's a normal thing." Newly minted lobbyists like to refer to their profession that way, as though they were leaving the Hill to make steel or sell television sets.

THERE'S ANOTHER REASON former Hill aides often make better lobbyists than do former executive branch officials: there are no legal restrictions on what they're allowed to do. One oddity of this little corner of the world of Washington sleaze is that the laws that have enmeshed Michael Deaver, Lyn Nofziger, and other Reagan White House aides don't even apply to the legislative branch. The not-especially-fierce 1978 Ethics in Government Act forbids former government employees from lobbying their former agency for one year after leaving, and bars them forever from lobbying on matters with which they were personally involved. But as with the Civil Rights Act and other laws regulating government behavior, the Ethics in Government Act exempts Congress and its employees.

Senate rules ostensibly forbid former senators or their staff members from lobbying their former offices for one year after leaving government service. Though the House hands out a 240-page Ethics Manual, it doesn't even include such a rule. Not that the Senate rule has much effect: according to a Senate Ethics Committee spokesman, there has never been a complaint filed under it. In any case the rules of the Senate have no legal power over those who no longer work there.

In the wake of the Deaver scandal, Republican Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina introduced a bill that for the first time would make it a criminal offense, punishable by a maximum of five years in prison or $250,000 in fines, for government officials, including members of Congress and their employees, to lobby their former offices for 18 months after they leave office (three years if the client is a foreign government). Such a bill is unlikely to pass. Last year Senator Charles McC. Mathias, Republican of Maryland, heading for retirement and the private sector himself, stopped it with a filibuster. This year it is stalled between committees.

William Diefenderfer III, who was staff director of the Senate Finance Committee during tax reform, is now arguably the most prominent Hill aide turned lobbyist. Highly respected, by the standards of the Ethics in Government Act he should be in jail. As an aide to Senator Robert Packwood, Republican of Oregon, Diefenderfer became the senator's closest political adviser. In *Showdown at Gucci*

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Gulch, a book about the tax reform fight by *Wall Street Journal* reporters Jeffrey Birnbaum and Alan Murray, the two men are described as "almost inseparable." According to the book, Diefenderfer was Packwood's drinking companion for the famous "two-pitcher lunch" at the Irish Times bar, at which Packwood was converted to the cause of reform and devised the beginnings of the plan that eventually became law.

Diefenderfer had been in and out of lobbying already, and complained to Birnbaum and Murray about his reduced earning power as a Hill aide. Birnbaum and Murray report that while Diefenderfer was in Packwood's employ, he accepted $14,250 in 1985 for 15 speeches to such disinterested parties as Northwestern Mutual Life and the Real Estate Tax Institute. Late last year, with tax reform in the bag, Diefenderfer formed a law firm with Washington attorney Bernard J. Wunder. Wunder had been an aide to the House Energy and Commerce Committee in the late 1970s and a Reagan Commerce Department official in the early 1980s. Among the clients Diefenderfer has registered to lobby for is the Mortgage Guarantee Insurance Corporation on the issue of "technical corrections to the Tax Reform Act of 1986." He has taken on the same cause for the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency, where he worked for two years before coming to the Hill. Another client is the Bohemia Lumber Company, hailing from Packwood's home state of Oregon. Diefenderfer's firm also represents several other large corporations on tax matters, including Metropolitan Insurance, Marriott Corporation, and Georgia-Pacific.

The firm has set about recruiting other well-connected Capitol Hill aides. In the past six months both Tom Ryan, the former chief counsel to Michigan Democratic Representative John Dingell's powerful Energy and Commerce Committee, and Ray O'Hara, the son of former Representative James G. O'Hara, Democrat of Michigan, and a former assistant to House Majority Leader Tom Foley of Washington, have started work for Diefenderfer.

FORMER congressional aides are prepared for the influence-peddling business by Congress's utilitarian approach to its work, and by its immersion in interest-group politics. Following the lawyer's model, Hill people believe that every side in a debate, every niggling interest, no matter how grubby its motives, deserves an advocate. And they see their job as doing everything they can to promote the interests of whoever pays the bills, be it a member of Congress or a corporation. "I believe in interest groups and the right of interest groups to be represented, and if I can represent them on the Hill, well, I will do it," says Harris Miller, a former aide to Kentucky Democrat Romano Mazzoli's House Judiciary subcommittee on immigration who now has his own lobbying firm. Miller's first big client was the National Council of Agricultural Employers, a group of large growers who use migrant and illegal alien workers. He helped them "streamline" certain provisions of the Simpson-Mazzoli immigration reform bill. When James Madison set out the doctrine of a government that mediated among conflicting interests, he did not intend that the interests and the mediators be the same group of people. Or that the interests would be represented based on their ability to pay.

For the most part, congressional aides and lobbyists inhabit the same moral universe. High-ranking aides especially tend to become hired guns even while still on the Hill. They go to work for the member who will adapt their public views, if not their private opinions, to his; of necessity, they take the same proprietary view of their boss's career that he does.

ASKED TO COMPARE their activities with Deaver's, Hill alumni first fault him for the lack of technique that got him caught. "The Deaver case was very grotesque in terms of the amount of lobbying that went on so soon after he left office," says Marc Lackritz, head of the Public Securities Association (the stocks-and-bonds lobby) and a former aide to the Energy and Commerce subcommittee with jurisdiction over government securities.

A second line of defense consists of the "principles" of interest-group politics. As Miller put it: "There is a different kind of decision-making on Capitol Hill. In the executive branch, one single person can make a decision which will have a major financial impact. On Capitol Hill, no matter how influential the staff person or member, that is still only one member of 535. There's rarely any one person who can do something unilaterally." In other words, Miller seems to be saying, his lobbying is not as offensive as Deaver's because it is not as effective. Miller's clients may wish to take note of his insistence that his efforts have no real impact.

In any event, Miller is being overly modest. Most congressional decision-making is effectively made by far fewer than 535 people. Often particular interests are out to kill one obscure amendment or to insert one tiny provision in a 1,000-page bill or to get a few words shaded their way. Though most of these matters go unnoticed by the press and other members, they can be worth millions of dollars to individual companies or states or nations or industries. The number of members who actually need to be convinced may be as small as four or five members of a subcommittee, or perhaps just the chairman.

To the Hill alums, Deaver wasn't a crooked lobbyist, just an uncouth one. "It raises some professional concerns, if not ethical ones," says Dowley. And the whole concept of conflict of interest disappears. "There's a perception problem but that's really all it is," says Lee Fuller, a former aide to the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee who is now employed by mega-lobbyist Charls Walker. Dowley and Fuller may be right: Deaver's activities were not fundamentally different from the daily work of thousands of Washingtonians who move easily in and out of government and back. We are witnessing the birth of a profession. Deaver violated the influence-pedders' professional standard: to knock on his doors and make his calls with modesty and dignity and discretion. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Orphaned, Abandoned

Orphans
(Lorimar)
Fatal Attraction
(Paramount)

Film has done it again. One more play that succeeded critically and commercially in the theater has been made into a film and revealed as spurious. I didn't see the play, *Orphans* by Lyle Kessler, which was produced in Chicago, New York, London, and elsewhere, but on the basis of the film, I attribute its success to two causes. First, the theater's dearth of rewarding plays, so that a mere mouthful seems a feast. (Which is not to imply that, in the film world, there's a feast of fine new work. Still, there are more good new films than new plays, in my view, and the lean stretches are more tolerable.)

Second, intrinsics of the medium. A play can live, or seem to live, by the theater's conventions of reality. I don't mean realism; there is no contest between theater and film in realism—film wins before the contest starts. But reality, the sense that the inner and outer worlds of the work have been joined and certified, can be achieved in the theater by conventions that don't always travel well. Some of those conventions, seemingly realistic but really abstract, are used in *Orphans* and fail to register in the film version. For instance, the final entrance of the Albert Finney character (described below), which might have seemed symbolic on stage, is merely incredible on screen. When conventions fail, the weight falls even more heavily on theme, and here *Orphans* disintegrates completely.

Like numerous other plays—*'night, Mother* is a recent example—*Orphans* exists because it can be acted. The fact that it can be used to the *actors'* benefit is its strongest asset. That is sometimes enough in the theater, where, for centuries, actors' vehicles, from the neoclassic to the naturalistic, have held the stage as vehicles and little more. But film, though it certainly has enough of its own limitations to deal with, tends to be impatient with plays of that kind, saying in effect, "All right, very nice acting. What of it?"

The screenplay, which Kessler did himself, begins with a newly written sequence, then mostly remains within the house where the play takes place. That beginning, added presumably because the filmmakers felt that some opening up was necessary, is misleading in tone. A slovenly dressed, crop-headed young man—Matthew Modine of *Full Metal Jacket*—harasses and robs a conventionally dressed yuppie in a Manhattan park. The keynote of the sequence is eccentric comedy, a note completely irrelevant to what follows. Modine returns to the lonely, ramshackle, cluttered house outside Newark where he lives with his younger brother, Kevin Anderson, whom he dominates. That house is crammed with neuroses, near-psychoses. Modine keeps his brother a virtual prisoner, virtually ignorant, frightening him about stepping outside by telling him he'll never find his way back. They are orphans.

One day Modine, who lives by stealing, brings home from a bar a well-dressed drunk, Finney, souses him further, discovers that the man's attaché case is full of securities (a symbolic word, I gather), decides to hold the man for ransom, and binds him to a chair. Finney, when he sobers up, shows himself to be powerful and clever, and, an orphan himself, takes a liking to the brothers. In time he revises their lives upward, in the condition of their home, their dress, their hopes. Near the end he departs, leaving them with substantial money. The boys immediately revert to their formal roles. Finney then returns with a bullet wound—we've had hints that he's a criminal—arriving unexplainedly on foot at this isolated house. He dies on the sofa in a crucified position, while the two youths, tearfully reconciled, huddle and hug on the floor at his feet.

Now what in the world is this all about? A Christian parable, a redeemer giving his life to save two other lives? A Freudian parable, an older orphan using two younger orphans as surrogates to heal the hurts of his own boyhood? The parable scrabble is enjoined by our conditioning: a work is supposed to have some inner meaning if it doesn't have sheer story interest. The story here is nothing but an excuse for thematic revelation, but that revelation is never resolved; so we are left with an empty story.

We're also left with a lot of impassioned acting. Acting of this sort, even when it's good—as it is here—becomes somewhat silly when it's not related to substantive material. Watching *Orphans* is like hearing a master musician and two gifted younger ones playing away fervently at exercises, expending on vacuous patterns the same skills and feelings they would use on true music. A waste.

Alan J. Pakula directed like old-time Elia Kazan in heat, slamming the two boys against each other as often as possible, slamming them against furniture and floor at other times, and at all times hurtling his camera at all three actors like a missile. The final fabrication is George Jenkins's design for the cluttered, dingy house. It is much like innumerable such sets for plays, and,

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Hamburger Hill. Some pulpy spots in the writing and directing, but this drama of a battle in the Vietnam War is much more than moving. (Reviewed 9/14&21/87)

Matewan. A grim coal-miners' strike, West Virginia, 1920, recalled with seriousness if not enough impact. Haskell Wexler's camera wonderfully recreates place and feeling. (9/7/87)

The Untouchables. Al Capone and Eliot Ness, Chicago, 1930. Solid old movie fare skillfully modernized. Robert De Niro is monstrous as Capone. (6/22/87)

Wish You Were Here. Sprightly yet serious performance by Emily Lloyd in a sprightly yet serious story of a headstrong teenage girl. An English seaside town, 1951, full of tattiness and sex. (8/3/87)

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for all its verism, seems to smell of canvas and paint.

Some of my sympathy trickled to the villain(ess) of *Fatal Attraction*. This domestic thriller—that is, one built on everyday life, not on high-level crime or international hugger-mugger—rests on a simple principle: actions have consequences. A thirtyish New York lawyer with wife and child, Michael Douglas, has an affair for one weekend with an editor of about his age, Glenn Close. It isn't planned; it just happens, while his wife and child are away. But it's a steamy encounter. When he is about to leave Close's apartment, this woman, shown to be knowing and knowledgeable, suddenly slits her wrists. Douglas helps her to recover, and *then* he leaves.

It develops that this affair, which, in his view, has happened and is over, is not over. He is not, so far as we know, a habitual philanderer, flitting from flower to flower, but he figures that when the weekend ends, that's it. The wrist-slitting is the first strong sign that more is involved. Then Close starts pestering him with phone calls and implicit threats, until he is forced to see her again, in a subway. She tells him she is pregnant. He offers to pay for the abortion, but she wants the child; more, she wants Douglas. She then sets out to harass him—also his wife and child—to force him to change his life.

Although we spend considerable time with Close, the focus of the screenplay, by James Dearden, is on Douglas and family. They are portrayed as the victims of a mad woman getting madder. But she herself is a victim. First, of biological inequality: he can walk away from the pregnancy and she cannot. (Even if there were an abortion, it is she who would have to go through it.) Second, after he has used the age-old line "You knew that I was married," which allows him to return snugly to hearth and home, she is left lonely and in love. He is surprised, then angered, then frightened, by her refusal to play The Game. The film's final shot, a framed photograph of the Douglas family, confirms that The Game is supposed to be sacrosanct. But scary as Close has been, I couldn't help feeling that she did most of the suffering in the story.

Douglas is acceptable in his role, if a bit wispy. Close is initially hard to take as an irresistible female, but the crazier she gets, the more affecting. Dearden's screenplay, except for its herniated obligatory final twist, is adequate. Adrian Lyne directs forcefully, but I wish he would lose the idea that style consists of beginning every sequence with a slow pan. Dearden and Lyne together do a good deal of telegraphing. When Douglas throws Close against a kitchen sink in a fight, a carving knife lies close at hand. Guess what she decides to do next. Douglas's wife takes a hot bath at the start of the last sequence and the bathroom mirror mists over; we know that when she wipes the mirror she's in for a surprise at what she'll see behind her. We also know what the surprise will be.

ROBERT BRUSTEIN ON THEATER

The Hit of the Building

The Jewish comedian Jackie Mason is a big hit at the Brooks Atkinson—a theater that lately has been harboring mostly British imports (*Steaming*, *Edmund Kean*, *Noises Off*, *Benefactors*). Mason is an import from an entirely different tradition. "It's a pleasure to meet me," he modestly admits on entering the stage, "I'm the star of this building." I suspect that's what the Brooks Atkinson represents to Mason—a *building*, not significantly different from the Las Vegas nightclubs and Borscht Belt hotels he's played in the past. And among the many refreshing things about his show, *The World According To Me!*, is its total lack of cultural piety.

Having improbably won a Tony, Mason is now playing to 100 percent capacity. It was nice to catch his act after he had had the time to reflect on his totally unexpected success. "I'm glad I'm a hit," he confides to the audience. "My career stunk till now . . . now I'm too big a star to talk to anyone." Sitting on the edge of the stage, describing his early life as a rabbi (bored, he started telling jokes to the congregation and soon began charg-

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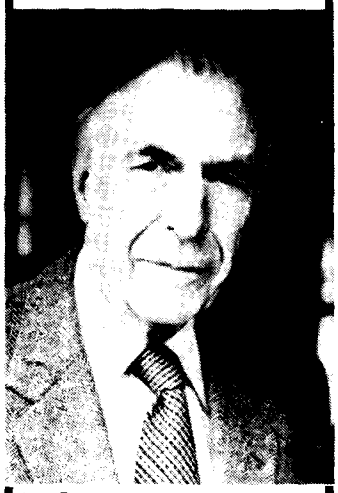

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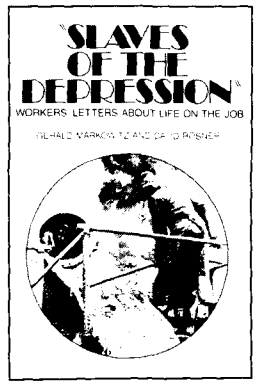

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ing cover and a minimum), Mason testifies to the ecstatic pleasures of postponed popularity.

A great deal of his appeal is nostalgic. How long has it been since we heard a comedian, matjes herring resonating in his voice, taking so for granted the Jewish identity of his audience? I was reminded of the glory days of Tamiment, where I first encountered the frenetic humor of Sid Caesar, of Grossingers and the Concord before they became convention sites. I remembered the burlesque comedians at the old Gaiety, the insult humor of Milton Berle, the high-stepping musicals starring Bert Lahr or Phil Silvers, Mel Brooks's two-thousand-year-old man, the rude jostling waiters at Ratners and Rappaports. As a matter of fact, Mason's humor is redolent of restaurants; it stimulates the salivary glands; much of it concerns food. He is a comedian unafraid of stereotyped ethnic or racial generalizations, chief among them the assumption that gentiles like to drink and Jews like to eat. As for Puerto Ricans, "They brought back something to this country that we almost lost—cockroaches." Gentiles don't have them because "Just how much can a cockroach drink?"

CHEERFULLY insisting that he abhors ethnic jokes, Mason devotes the greater part of his act to outrageous, usually prohibited, ethnic characterizations. Italians are tough street fighters; blacks are snazzy dressers ("they got no closets, they wear everything at once"). Poles are dumb; Hispanics strip cars (Mason travels to Puerto Rico every year "just to visit my hubcaps"). Yet Mason is far from being a Jewish chauvinist; his most telling satire is reserved for arrivistes and suburbanites, which is to say most of his coreligionists out front.

For him, every Jew is neurotically devoted to status symbols—the plush apartment lobby, the Muzak-filled elevator, the Mercedes he can't afford to gas, the yacht he's never learned to sail ("Is there a bigger schmuck on earth than a Jew with a boat?"), or—a Jew's most precious possession—his car telephone ("The gentiles are crashing from drinking, Jews are crashing from dialing"). The gentile worships his boss and will sell his soul for a key to the toilet; the Jew thinks "the man is a schmuck," and will settle only for a key to the vault.

The Jew is embarrassed to work with his hands, he can't even turn on his VCR, while "there's nothing happier

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than a gentile with a broken car. . . . On Sunday, you can't find them, they're all under their cars." As for the Jewish wife, when she says *I do*, "That's the last thing she does." She hasn't cooked a meal in nine years and he's "shlepping garbage." The transformation of the Jewish husband into a Japanese wife explains the popularity of Chinese restaurants (an anomaly since "you never see a Chinaman in a Jewish restaurant"). Jews change their names, they cut off their noses, they give French names to their Miami condos—all as a result of what Mason calls "The Identity Crisis of Minorities in This Country." What he means is Jews. When the show is over, the gentiles will always tell him how funny he was. "You know what the Jews will say? Too Jewish."

RUDE AS his humor is, Mason knows exactly how to work his largely Jewish audience to love his insults. Ambling onto a stage that features a star-studded cyclorama and a revolving globe ("There's no furniture in this show—that is the main quality; when you go into a furniture store, do they show you a comedian?"), Mason looks like the offspring of Edward G. Robinson and Joe Papp, with his flat face, large lips, hooded eyes, and modified Afro. His Yiddish-inflected Sten-gun delivery is illustrated with hand motions close to his waist that saw and slice the air. Within seconds, he has established an atmosphere of nightclub intimacy in a house of considerable dimension, largely by identifying some unfortunate in the first row as the mute target of his caustic asides ("Did you come here just to get even with the Jewish people?").

A projection of the famous Hollywood sign and the Beverly Hills Hotel ("Now it looks like a show") follows his warm-up, initiating a turn on the pretensions of the West Coast, where everyone's a producer, talking deals and handing out business cards ("That's all they produce—cards"). Mason is offended by the prevalence of sex scenes in movies ("They say, Doesn't everyone have sex? I say, Doesn't everyone have soup?") and, even more, by the paleolithic mutterings of such movie stars as Sylvester Stallone. "I talk poifect, I can't make a living. Who is he to make such a fortune when I have to talk to a schmuck like this?"

Mason's priceless parody of the inarticulate Stallone, followed by equally cogent riffs on Alfred Hitchcock and James Cagney, establishes him as a gifted impersonator with a strong satiric bent. And when the projection changes to a map of the world, he demonstrates a powerful capacity for political commentary as well. Noting that the world is made up of two-thirds water ("Do we really need all this water? Maybe the gentiles need it, but the Jews have a swimming pool"), he proceeds to take on all the nation's leaders, starting with Reagan ("a great president, it just so happens this is not his field"). Mason is delighted with Reagan's unfailing cheerfulness—always laughing, though nobody knows the joke. He just can't believe he got the job. All the other recent presidents have always looked "nauseous." But this guy always goes, "Ha, ha, ha." Maybe he's proud of the fact that Grenada has never attacked this country, or of his continually failing memory—"The only thing I remember about Iran is that I forgot."

Ted Kennedy and Henry Kissinger (also savagely imitated) can't be understood because of incomprehensible Boston and Viennese accents. Gary Hart's campaign manager, when he returns to the campaign, will be Dr. Ruth. Ollie North turns out to be a guy "who never made more than $85 a week and is controlling the whole world." As for Nixon, "I love a crook who knows his business. . . . Every week they caught him and every week somebody else went to jail." In perhaps the wildest moment of the show, Mason offers his own diagnosis of Nixon's physical afflictions while in office. He had syphilis. "You can't screw 200 million people and end up with phlebitis." Inspired by his own medical acumen, he characterizes Reagan's visits to the hospital as those of an ailing Pinocchio. "Every time he says he never heard of the *contras*, he gets another nose operation."

THIS, I submit, is political analysis of the highest order, and it becomes high geopolitical analysis during his observations on Israel. Mason epitomizes the American Jew's astonishment over Israeli pugnacity. Israel's tough army ("I thought Puerto Ricans drove the Jewish tanks") baffles a man who always believed that Jews were incapable of street fighting or terrifying other races ("I never saw four black people say, Watch out, there's a Jew over there"). Guns are not for Jews—"unless there's coffee and cake." Yet the Israeli military triumphs in the Middle East fill him, like most Jews, with a secret

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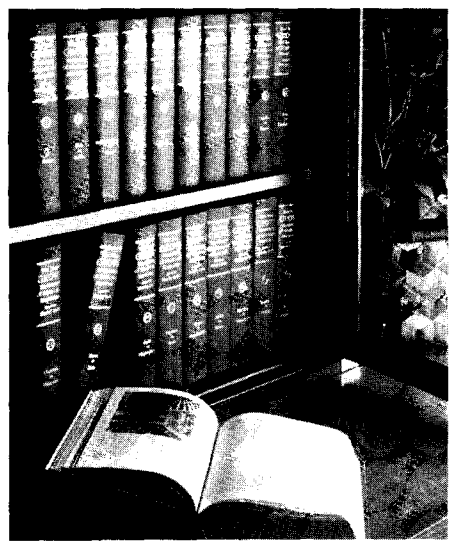

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pride—why, Israel only turned back from taking the Suez Canal because it didn't have a boardwalk.

Curiously, Mason's wit falters when he turns to show business. His Al Jolson, Sinatra, and Crosby impersonations seem a little fatigued, though he taps considerable energy out of his virulent hatred of folk singers ("There's nobody on earth who's lower—and I say this with the highest respect. They're always saying 'Everybody'—you sing and they make the money"). And his impersonation of Ed Sullivan—so stunned by Mason's Jewish humor that for the rest of his life he couldn't move his shoulders—brings back memories of a great vaudeville age. Jackie Mason is the last of a vanishing species, a species of unafraid Jewish comedians and unashamed Yiddish culture. Catch him before it vanishes altogether.

The preposterous political romanticism of Roberto Unger.

THE PROFESSOR OF SMASHING

BY STEPHEN HOLMES

I.

NOW THAT THE counterculture is fading from memory, someone has finally written a philosophical work summarizing its fondest aspirations. Roberto Unger first came to public attention more than a decade ago with *Knowledge and Politics* (1975) and *Law in Modern Society* (1976). As a professor at Harvard Law School, he has since allied himself with the Critical Legal Studies movement, recently publishing a manifesto on its behalf. Critical of both Marxism and liberalism, Unger quickly won a reputation as a heterodox but brilliant political theorist; in some circles, and despite his relative youth (he is 40), he has now attained the status of mastermind and sage.

His new volumes—collectively titled *Politics, a Work in Constructive Social Theory*—all converge on the same defiant but hopeful conclusions. They are meant to be read together, although philosophers may be especially drawn to the methodological slant of *Social Theory* and social historians to the illustrative material analyzed in *Plasticity into Power*. The bulging second volume, *False Necessity*, is indisputably the centerpiece of the work. Replete with historical learning and practical suggestions, the entire book imparts a simple message: the professor of law hopes to "loosen constraints."

Promulgating a "gospel of plasticity," Unger now advocates flexibility over rigidity, experiment over routine, disobedience over compliance, inventiveness over habit, improvisation over scripts, and the personal over the impersonal. Declaring "war against the tyranny of roles," he exalts the "jumbling" or "permanent confusion" of social and sexual roles. In typical '60s fashion, he finds nothing more abhorrent than the status quo. If we follow his advice, we will "disrespect and destabilize custom and privilege," refuse to play by the rules, explode stale conventions, tear down hierarchies, and decline work that discourages the expression of personal uniqueness. To usher in "a transfigured human reality," we must undertake a mischievous activity called "context-smashing"—the sabotaging of *all* stable expectations. Our ultimate goal should be a "complete remaking of society."

To fulfill "the radical project" we must not only slip our own chains, we must also "cleanse social life of its taint of enslavement." In depicting his wished-for assault upon "all settled ties and preconceptions," Unger employs a variety of synonyms for "smash," including shatter, break, crack, dismember, pull apart, and trash. He also presses gentler words into service: dissolve, transform, disentrench, remake, revise, shake up, destabilize, wear down, resist, disturb, and even transcend. But his exhortation is always the same. We should "raise a storm," accepting mankind's "vocation for indiscipline" and "turning subversion into a practical way of life."

Unger's paean to naughtiness is the flip side of his disdain for the establishment and his desire to shock conventional minds. Casting himself as the spokesman for "our unfulfilled longings," he excogitates a social order in which everyday life will become "a condition for experimental freedom," where everything is "up for grabs" and subject to "perpetual innovation." Do you dread, above all else, slipping into a rut? If so, this is the book for you.

The "repeated liquefaction of entrenched structure" will rinse away the difference between routine and revolution: everyday behavior will radically convulse all basic institutions, habits, and assumptions. Such volatility will enable us to realize both political and personal objectives. For one thing, privileged groups and inherited ethnic divisions will vanish. Politically, Unger's "redeemed society" will assume the form of "a mobilizational democracy committed to open up every feature of the social order to collective challenge and revision and to liquefy all rigid roles and hierarchies." His image of personal fulfillment is equally sloshy and somewhat dreamier, involving not merely the abolition of envy and frustration, but also "the ability to entertain fantasies about possible forms of self-expression or association and to live them out." In the widely circulated manuscript of this work, he had described his "special sort of happiness" quite racily as "the diurnal repetition for social life of what the Marquis de Sade recommended for sex: the strenuous enlargement of enacted possibilities." Although he has discreetly

Politics, a Work in Constructive Social Theory
by Roberto Mangabeira Unger
(Cambridge University Press, three volumes)

Social Theory: Its Situation and Its Task
(256 pp., $39.50, $12.95 paper)

False Necessity: Anti-Necessitarian Social Theory in the Service of Radical Democracy
(653 pp., $59.50, $18.95 paper)

Plasticity into Power: Comparative-historical Studies of the Institutional Conditions of Economic and Military Success
(231 pp., $37.50, $10.95 paper)

Stephen Holmes teaches political theory at the University of Chicago.

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deleted this phrase from the published text, his ambitions haven't changed: Unger still hopes to do for the daylight what Sade did for the night.

WHY DOES Unger call himself a "superliberal"? Answering this question brings us to the heart of his position. Human beings are almost "passive automatons" of their cultural contexts and "faceless representatives of predetermined roles." Almost, but not quite. Individuals can never be definitively robotized. Personality is always brimming with endless possibilities aching to be realized: "We are an infinite caught within the finite." Our limitedness is due largely to inadequate social arrangements, which willful spirits can trash. Here lies the secret of Unger's superliberalism: he views society consistently from "the perspective of the will." He is interested in revolutionizing the polity and the economy principally as a means for "freeing subjective experience," satisfying the individual's "longing for self-assertion" and releasing "the implicit boundlessness of personal subjectivity."

Primarily devoted to unbuttoned self-assertion, Unger also hopes for a "drastic reform" of intimate relations. Although he usually maintains his distance from advanced Western societies such as the United States, Unger admires our "radical experimentation with personal relations." Intimacy in America remains "tainted," however. To achieve "a heightened condition of plasticity" in personal relationships, we must "make ourselves more fully available to each other"—available as "originals," not as off-the-shelf replicas of social stereotypes. The new intimacy will involve "radical mutual acceptance" and "a heightening of mutual vulnerability." Groups as well as couples will be affected.

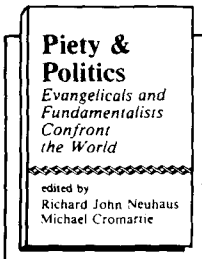
In *Knowledge and Politics*, Unger defined community as "the political equivalent of love." He has subsequently distanced himself from communitarian ideals, as the individualistic turn of *Politics* suggests. But he can still write approvingly about a "cleansing" of solidarity. Empowered democracy will foster "a regenerate life in common," that is, a purified form of solidarity that "draws our communal relations closer to love." Purged of any trace of inherited group identity, such erotic belonging will never compromise the radical independence of the individual. If context-smashing requires disloyalty, so be it.

While stultifying contexts thwart our potentials, "conventional" social scientists and historians pile insult upon injury, promoting the "sanctification of existing society," or the fiction that things have to be the way they are. Until now, students of society have labored under the illusion that "to explain past or present situations" they had to assume that "these situations were or are necessary." *Politics* exposes the error of their ways. Diagnosing the present as a necessary stage in a "compulsive sequence," Marxism, too, commits an unpardonable crime against human freedom. Indeed, "false necessity" or "the identification of the actual with the possible" is a collective self-delusion of the human race. Here is the theme captured by the title of Unger's middle and pivotal volume: "We talk and act as if the established institutions were natural, necessary, and even holy."

An optimistically interpreted Freud serves Unger as a model in his effort to demolish this "idolatry of the actual," to illuminate the darkness and dispel our collective illusions. The theorist-therapist will "demystify society" and thereby set us free. Unger's liberating message is that "everything is politics" (a slogan revived by Critical Legal Studies), that things can be other than they are. Born again by this revelation, we will cease being the "puppets" and begin to be the "architects" of our milieus.

HAVING STUDIED the claim that "no one context can be our permanent home," a reader might infer that Unger advocates context-hopping as a technique for realizing the multiple facets of our rich personalities. By skillfully plying the airways, for example, one and the same person can be a scholar in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and a political activist in Rio de Janeiro. But double lives are not at all what Unger has in mind. He is much less interested in a series of distinct human potentials realizable in different locales than in a single mighty potential: "our astonishing ability" to smash contexts. We cannot fulfill our "transformative vocation" by leaving one framework and joining another, but only by shattering and reshaping the framework we are in. Only context-smashing qualifies as real action, adequate to mankind's "longing for greatness."

In some ways, Unger's thinking is more aesthetic than political. Without irony, he describes "the transparent, created social world" he yearns to establish



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as "this joy, this dazzling game, this work of art." He compares a revolutionary acquiring power while others die to a poet trying to pitch upon an elusive word. But among Unger's aestheticizing claims, none is more eye-catching than the following: in a mercurial and redeemed social order, the "ordinary person" will become "more like the poet, whose visionary heightening of expressed emotion may border on unintelligibility and aphasia." Unger intends this as a positive recommendation, suggesting that he may have already achieved that coveted "freedom from the fear of the ridiculous" characteristic of truly "empowered" individuals.

II.

THAT THESE volumes are "visionary" should be clear. Yet Unger also has practical and theoretical ambitions. To those itching for change, he wants to offer not merely moral encouragement, but also "a guide to transformative practice."

Unger's constitutional proposals, to select one example, reflect his profound distaste for the "banal system of checks and balances" that paralyzes government and precludes bold reform. Our "demobilizing constitutionalism," he laments, makes it "hard for a victorious party to seize the state or, having seized it, to execute its program rapidly and decisively." To escape this frustrating predicament, he proposes a "constitutionalism of permanent mobilization," which will keep society bubbling and somehow guarantee that majoritarianism is consistent with the greatest possible freedom to experiment.

The most striking feature of this constitution is a new branch of government devoted to destabilizing "every aspect" of social life. Unger doesn't explain how such a branch could be effective if it were democratically accountable, or how it would be tolerable if it were not. He does say that all citizens will receive an ironclad guarantee of welfare support, untouchable by officials or majorities, almost suggesting (for an instant) that rigidity can be a virtue rather than a vice.

Unger finds markets acceptable only so long as they are power-free, that is, do not permit some people to use their economic resources to influence others unduly. His complex economic proposals include the abolition of inherited capital assets, public control over basic investment decisions, and continuous interventions by a confiscatory state to break up concentrations of wealth. A two-tiered system of lending banks will distribute public funds to teams of entrepreneurs, technicians, and workers. Each team will try to make a profit; but an ever-alert government will reclaim accumulated wealth whenever it swells beyond a certain point. Taking a decentralized form, reminiscent of petty commodity production, Unger's ideal economy will also be incredibly innovative and dynamic.

Along with this "guide" to reform, Unger offers "a new understanding of society." The subjects he surveys are surprisingly diverse. In the course of his speculations, he discusses marsupials, the crisis of feudalism, tank warfare, the funded public debt, stratigraphy, the analytic-synthetic distinction, nomadic civilizations, the origins of the cosmos, Sung dynasty China, the failings of neoclassical economics, Yugoslavia's self-management system, Euclidean geometry, and much, much more. Unsoiled by the smudge of false modesty, he begins numerous chapters with authoritative remarks about "much of history," "the vast majority of historical situations," "most societies of the past," "all the forms of social life that have existed in history," and "the experience of mankind." From every topic and period, Unger pretends to draw encouragement for his radical program. (His lounge-about familiarity with esoteric knowledge is nicely conveyed by the word "remember" in the following sentence, referring to nothing previously discussed in the text: "Remember the Byzantine military farms—*ktemata stratiotika*, the Ottoman timariots, the Mughal *zamindars*, and the Aztec military life-tenants.")

As the appended bibliographies demonstrate, Unger has drawn heavily on conventional historical and sociological research. But the entire work, especially *Social Theory*, reveals a surprisingly undifferentiated attitude toward fellow academics. He describes them variously as cowardly, naive, deluded, flaccid, asleep, confused, superstitious, and one-dimensional. They are collaborators, apologists, and traitors to freedom. He even calls them sterile and impotent, perhaps to underline his own "fecundity," which is mentioned more than once. Indeed, Unger's portrait of his colleagues diverges in almost every respect from his picture of himself.

IT WOULD nevertheless be a mistake to assume that such a polemical work exhibits no intellectual balance. Unger is scrupulously fair-minded about capitalism and communism, arguing that the Soviet Union is no freer than the United States. It is just as possible to reach "the true republic" by transforming America as by transforming Russia. He obviously feels a greater sympathy for the Third World than for either of the superpowers, however. Unfettered by enduring constitutions, Third World countries display an "exemplary instability." Their citizens are especially lucky that rules for attaining political power remain "ill-defined." Brazil, in particular, seems full of promise—though Unger's patriotism does not make him wholly uncritical. He is merciless, for example, toward the "pathetic mimicry of foreign ideas" he encounters among Brazil's intellectual elite.

TELLING MOTHER

The piano here by the living-room window.
With the window open, the shade rolled up:
the moon. The first cool night, like any night.

A night I sing to the stereo, full-voiced,
The Platters Golden Hits, songs you won
in a high school talent show, songs by heart.

Late at night. The neighbors fold their chairs
and go inside. *A voice like your mother's.*
That's what I remember best: hiding,

my back against the back of the vinyl couch,
and you in the rocker by the window, singing
lyrics you had copied into a notebook.

I couldn't read. *It's only a paper moon.*
You must have thought I was still in bed,
asleep: you sang the book through.

Now you know how. It happened. A week now.
The piano by the open window, the first breeze,
my voice now. A man, a stranger, crosses the lawn

and stops. Walks, carefully, to the front door, tries
the knob. It's as simple as that: the piano,
a woman's voice that carries past the screen,
the moonlit porch. The knob turns. Late at night.

SHARON KLANDER

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But the edge of his razor is reserved for the United States. What he finds most repellent about America is the trivial nature of our "normal politics" (a phrase meant to echo Thomas Kuhn's "normal science"). Our best politicians seek only "worthless changes." We are fixated on necessary but essentially moderate goals such as housing, food, and health care. We may hope to redistribute wealth, or to encourage more participation in politics; but we never dream the impossible dream, never attempt a radical transformation of the social order. Indeed, those who strive to improve the welfare state are "tinkerers." Their efforts will only enable the despicable system to survive.

Unger's attitude toward Marxism is more complex. He announces that *Politics* is a "leftist book," as if the hyperconventional left/right scheme should be accepted uncritically rather than smashed. Like Marx, he admires the anti-traditionalist, dynamic, and innovative powers of capitalism. He too suggests that civil society, the everyday world in which we live and work, should realize the universalistic and egalitarian ideals foreshadowed in liberal politics. And he also foresees the end of prehistory, the establishment of an unprecedented social world in which human beings become "masters" of their destiny. He foresees this brave new world but refuses to guarantee that it will arrive.

Marx's gravest blunder was to attribute the coming of communism to iron necessity, thereby turning heroic revolutionaries into the marionettes of history. More devoted to human spontaneity than to inexorable progress, Unger refuses to predict the future. He is so certain of Marx's error on this question that he returns dozens of time, one might almost say compulsively, to lengthy denunciations of "compulsive sequence." Indeed, the mileage he gets out of this obvious and conventional form of anti-Marxism is nothing short of stupefying. A more repetitive attack on repetitiveness is difficult to imagine.

III.

AS MY SUMMARY suggests, this book contains some obscurities, contradictions, and unanswered questions. Consider just a few of the more obvious puzzles and problems.

Unger bafflingly identifies breaking a rule with changing a rule, as if disobedience were the same as reform. He advo-

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cates "cumulative" change while declaring that everything inherited must be smashed. He expounds endlessly on the ways flexibility can enhance survival, intimating inconsistently that endurance is an important value. He alternately admires and deplores capitalism's ruthless approach to failed economic experiments. He despises a society of "placeholders," but hopes to understand himself "as a being with place." He deprecates inherited group identity, while praising involuntary obligations, including "shared nationhood." He declaims against inflexible arrangements, while inexplicably applauding the "lasting personal commitments" of marriage. He associates "empowerment" with extreme voluntariness and yet remarks, as if it were a bonus, that "experiences of empowerment have an addictive force." Under the umbrella term "naturalistic social theory" he blurs together two quite dissimilar attitudes: the belief that moral ideals are immutable and the belief that actual institutions are immutable. He assumes throughout that context-smashing is inherently leftist, involving a successful demolition of elites, while admitting parenthetically that context-smashing can easily create unprecedented hierarchies of privilege and power. He asserts numerous times that if current arrangements did not have to become the way they are, then they do not have to be the way they are—as if irreversible processes could not be initiated by chance. Monotonously announcing the boldness of his insight into false necessity, he admits in passing that social theorists have always recognized it.

And the cascade of contradictions doesn't cease here. While pouring contempt on social theory's traditional appeal to nature, Unger offers "the mutability of human nature" as a moral standard: we must construct a society that embodies and respects man's inborn destructive-creative powers. While spurning social transformation pursued in the name of static ideals, he upholds the "unbiased decision-procedure" as an unchanging goal of reform. He proposes a constitutional scheme for successor generations while striving "to weaken the tyranny of the present over the future." He endorses Quine's criticism of the analytic-synthetic distinction, while uncritically accepting the closely related form-content distinction. His paradoxical, and therefore interesting, idea that "conflict" is a creative force is rendered tautological by his casual admission that "good" conflict must be free of animosity, violence, and a hardening of battle fronts. He makes changing the rules in the middle of the game sound agreeable by neglecting to ask what happens when each player changes the rules in a different manner. He never explains how fellow "transformers" will communicate with each other once they have destroyed the background assumptions that render mutual comprehension, including disagreement, possible. The main reason Unger rejects the status quo is that it does not permit human beings to be all that they could be, but the very same complaint can be leveled at any particular transformative effort: we could always transform the world in *other* ways.

UNGER'S PENCHANT for idea-jumbling is also illustrated by his attitude toward power. He manages to identify simultaneously with the winners and the losers, crying for the weak and laughing with the strong—an achievement not even Nietzsche could match. On the one hand, he reviles powerful elites who, throughout history, have successfully obstructed change and exploited their feebler companions. On the other hand, especially in the third volume, he indulges in a veritable cult of worldly success, arguing that power is a prize awarded to those most willing to smash their inherited contexts.

Aware of this mind-wrenching disorder, Unger pre-emptively denigrates the value of internal coherence, claiming that "insight can outreach consistency." This is a respectable position, I suppose, but it certainly proves grueling for the reader. The claim that we "can always discover more to be true than we can prove, verify, or even make sense of" implies that discomfort with unintelligible ideas is a sign of intellectual servility. But the difficulties presented by *Politics* cannot all be fairly laid on the poor reader's head. While criticizing innumerable social theorists, for example, Unger almost never names names. (Who actually says that basic social institutions must remain the way they are?) This omission makes it difficult to gain "critical distance," that is, to exercise one's own small portion of "negative capability" on Unger's speculations.

While trumpeting the extremism of his position, and even claiming that it will fundamentally change our intellectual situation, Unger also has a disconcerting tendency to interlard his text

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with offhand concessions to common sense. Sober remarks are dropped in passing, without being integrated into the basic argument, which would be pointless if it weren't shocking. He occasionally straightens his tie, for example, and poses as a sober older brother, offering sage counsel to younger and less seasoned leftists. Anarchistic or infantile "modernists," he bodefully observes, hope to smash one context after another, refuse to "settle down," and forever act "as if everything were up for grabs." He supplements this amicable dissent, confusingly, with outright sympathy for their point of view. As you trail behind him on his long march, you will often find the distinction between his own position and the one ascribed to his immature brethren too subtle to discern. The only serious problem with infantile context-smashers, in truth, is their failure to recognize that we can invent "less imprisoning social contexts," that is, institutions that cry out to be smashed and thus allow us to settle down without settling down. The cogency of this idea, distinguishing Unger from the anarchist, is less than perfectly clear.

But why does Unger exaggerate his differences with infantile modernism? Perhaps he is thinking of public relations. His sympathy with the remote, his celebration of infinite possibilities, and his commitment only to social arrangements that have never had a chance to disappoint him—these are all unmistakable symptoms of romanticism, an outlook that, in an age that knows about the consequences of romanticism in politics, begs for a smoke screen. Occasional asides of avuncular chastisement, addressed to the lunatic fringe, may well serve as precisely this sort of distraction or decoy.

IV.

THE RIOT of inconsistency and the overdose of rhetoric aside, Unger's positions seems vulnerable to eight basic objections.

- Context-smashing is not an attractive basis for a moral doctrine. The destructive behavior Unger admires can, obviously, be good or bad, depending on the context being smashed and the replacements available. His suggestion that one context can be superior to another only by being easier to change is equally implausible.
- Culture cannot be adequately conceived as an iron lid slammed shut on an otherwise infinite personality. We would not be freer without it—whatever "superliberals" might imagine. The possibilities we value are, in part, creatures of cultural systems and social institutions. They cannot be generated spontaneously by the prodigality of the individual soul.
- If all stable expectations were smashed, both surprise and nonconformity would become impossible. You can shatter the brittle, but not the fluid. Thus, a progressive "liquefaction" of society might have the unintended effect of diminishing opportunities for the exercise of context-smashing powers. Unger concedes as much, though again inconsistently, when he describes modern Western societies not only as easier but also as harder to change than more rigid societies of the past.
- For young children, the mentally unstable, the homeless, and other vulnerable individuals, context-smashing would be harmful, or redundant. Why disdain the anxieties of rootlessness? Elementary psychiatry suggests that it is not easy to maintain one's sanity in a condition of total flux. Unger parenthetically concedes that human beings need security, and that radical instability might deprive some people of some options. He also half-accepts the human desire to survive. But he displays no mercy at all for the timid wish to maintain one's "way of life." Workers reluctant to retool are viewed with as much contempt as members of ethnic groups who stubbornly cling to an inherited identity. (The fierceness with which he attacks the institution of "job tenure" may tempt some readers to suggest a simple way for the professor to align his practice with his theory.)
- When a politician announces that we *must* go to war or submit to a tax increase, citizens are obliged to express their doubts. To that extent, *Politics* has a genuinely important, though not earthshaking, lesson to convey. By focusing on advantages reaped by elites, however, Unger makes his account of pseudo-inevitability much less interesting than it might otherwise be. After all, "I can't help it" is a fairly ubiquitous technique for enhancing individual freedom, as useful to subordinates as to superiors. And it isn't easy to imagine a human society in which such an excuse would never be deployed.

False necessity may also result from a psychological drive to minimize guilt and frustration. To soothe a bad conscience, or to reconcile ourselves to straitened circumstances (that is, to re-

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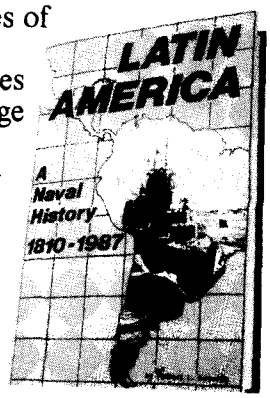

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duce dissonance), we may tend to underestimate the alternatives actually available to us. Or we may turn a blind eye to various real possibilities because a surfeit of options is psychologically disorienting, impairing our ability to make rational comparisons and choices. Such "self-deception" is independent of plots by the powerful to dominate the weak.

These are fairly obvious considerations, worth mentioning only because they surface nowhere in Unger's far from economical discussion, or rather scolding, of false necessity. We might also ask whether human beings can ever know precisely what can and cannot be done, neither over- nor underestimating the range of alternatives accessible to them. Unger, incidentally, neglects the harmful effects of overly optimistic assessments. He is certainly less worried about trying the impossible than about failing to try the possible. Never mind that scarce resources and even lives can be shamefully wasted when the unfeasible is considered feasible.

• Sensible and effective reform requires the reformer to gain a foothold in the actual institutions, beliefs, and ongoing social movements that Unger dismissively lumps together as "the given." The civil rights movement invoked constitutional guarantees that had already been secured for the white majority. The women's movement echoes the civil rights movement, not smashing the past but trying to build upon it. Unger admits, inconsistently, that human beings cannot doubt, distrust, or attack everything at once; but his fundamental claim is that context-smashing is *not* context-dependent. The determined subversive does not defy one part of his context on the basis of another part, but rather defies his entire context (even if not all at once) on the basis of his infinite personality, never appealing to past successes but, at most, to past defeats. But surely such "autonomy" of social reformers from the given social world is debilitating rather than invigorating. It even leads Unger to assert that the moral attitude of reformers must be based on "groundless choice." Such "a gratuitous act of commitment" may be compatible with superindividualistic self-assertion, but it does not provide a very promising basis for the societywide cooperation required for reform.

• The all-important concept of a "framework" presents serious problems. What does it mean to say that a framework "immunizes itself" against change? Does Unger want to suggest that an institutional and cultural context is a conscious agent able to perceive and defend its own interests? His examples, too, raise more questions than they answer. Conventional social scientists cannot understand the relation between savings and investment, apparently, because they are blind to the formative framework, that is, because they ignore other factors such as confidence in the consistency of government and the form and level of unemployment insurance. There is a core of healthy common sense in this analysis. But the question remains: Why affix a pretentious label such as "the framework" to wrongly neglected "other factors"? Are public trust and unemployment insurance part of the framework because they cannot themselves be influenced by other activities occurring "within" the framework? Do they shape without being shaped in turn? Or are they shaped solely by contextless fighting among context-free context-smashers?

• A stable expectation is not the worst thing one human being can inflict on another. The rigid is not the root of all evil. For finite beings, rigidities can be possibility-creating. That "rigid roles" are far from valueless is obvious to anyone who considers, say, the duties of a lifeguard. Unger may not approve of "rigid divisions" between science and religion and between religion and politics, but reasonable arguments can be adduced in their defense. Inherited hierarchies are useless; but a "rigid" chain of command can be convenient during emergencies, when democratic consultation may hamper prompt action, not to mention being essential for the retrospective apportionment of blame. Even "rigid routines," which Unger assails with untrammeled fury, can be liberating, allowing us to focus on what really matters. Most important of all, grammar illustrates the way rigidities create flexibilities. (His interest in zoology apparently never led Unger to contemplate the advantages enjoyed by vertebrates over jellyfish.) *Politics* spurns "disempowering constraints." As many philosophers have pointed out, however, the "rigid rules" of a game or language are not disabling, but enabling.

V.

PLASTICITY INTO POWER is largely concerned with the dynamics of state-building. Like Hegel and others, Unger argues that European states became more powerful as their citizens be-

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came more free. A mutual reinforcement of individualism and centralized sovereignty occurred in two ways: through the weakening of oppressive local magnates and through the flourishing of a free, monetized economy from which a government could extract funds without exhausting its tax base. His more original thesis, however, involves the uniqueness of the West. Why did European societies "take off" economically, rather than relapsing into a miserable "natural economy" as did all great agrarian-bureaucratic empires of the past?

On the basis of a personal survey, Unger has gleaned the following lesson from European and, indeed, world history: to prevent economic stagnation, the central government must ally itself with "the vast masses of the population" against predatory elites. This is a moral lesson, of course, tantamount to: if you are good, you will succeed. (Here the Marxist influence on *Politics* comes most sharply into focus.) Rephrased for Third World audiences, the lesson reads: national prosperity and power do not require predatory elites or big estates.

THE WORD "militant" is often used by the far left as a euphemism for "militaristic," helping conceal the bloody-mindedness and addiction to martial virtues characteristic of would-be revolutionaries. As if to confirm our worst suspicions, one-half of *Plasticity into Power* is devoted to a near-rhapsodic chronicle of the strictly military advantages of social plasticity. At one point Unger threatens, in a phrase worthy of a bumper sticker, "plasticity or death." About tradition-bound peoples who fail to adapt, he writes: "Their defeat pleases as much as it instructs." He describes Abel Gance's Napoleon as "the great hero, the man of will, embodying to the highest degree the rage of transcendence and the transformative vocation." And he looks forward expectantly to the time when the deviant will become "dominant" and "triumphant."

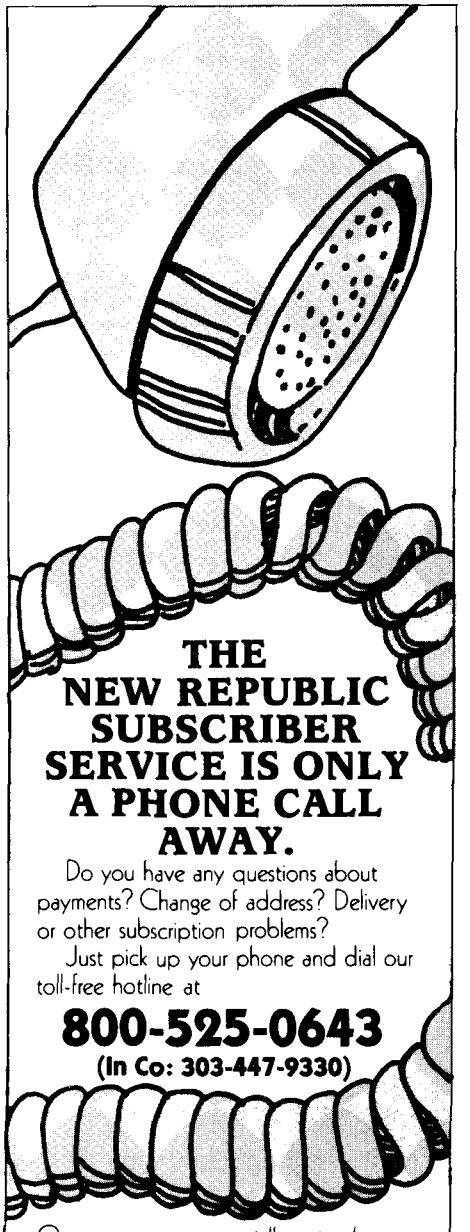
By recommending a "transformation of hierarchies of values" and apotheosizing "the transformative will," he also invokes Napoleon's admirer, Nietzsche. Revealing the voluntaristic core of his superliberalism, Unger even remarks that the wearisome reform cycles afflicting capitalist and communist societies alike "insult the primacy of the will." But he makes his most interesting Nietzschean gesture during a discussion of the "mobile and warlike peoples" who are able to revitalize faltering agrarian civilizations by conquest. The way he describes this injection of new vitality is quite telling: "The rule of the nomads over the agrarian peoples was sometimes only a predatory extension of dominion over animal flocks to the mastery of human subjects."

The mastery that Unger usually endorses, of course, is exercised over social contexts, not over fellow human beings. But his image of "individual and collective self-affirmation," superficially peaceful, is deeply colored by his appreciation of conquest. His affectionate reference to "epic grandeur" makes this clear, as does his desire to satisfy "our hidden and insulted longing for greatness." Ultimately, or so the extraordinary concluding sentence of *False Necessity* suggests, he hopes to mingle the excitement of battle with the honey of self-love: "What more could we ask of society than a better chance to be both great and sweet?"

That Unger could resort to such language is deeply disturbing. That he could take "will" as his starting point, aestheticize political violence, shower derision on the boring bourgeois world, and hope for a dramatic uncorking of stifled human possibilities—all without clearly distinguishing his own position from that of political romantics, not to mention fascists—is simply beyond comprehension.

UNGER'S confusing attitude toward power (why doesn't the historical triumph of predatory elites provide evidence of *their* superior flexibility?) is obscured even further by his book's conclusion, where the resolute transformer retracts much of what he has previously said. Plasticity, it turns out, is not good in itself; it is only capable of producing good results when "harnessed" to a "higher social ideal." Not extreme freedom alone, but also extreme oppression, may result from the program advocated here. Shattering entrenched structures is good or bad, depending on what happens next. After jeering at his colleagues for offering so little, Unger serves up the limp claim that radical efforts to improve society do not have to fail.

Unger initially rebukes "naive historians" for failing to notice major discontinuities in the course of social evolution. By the end of *Politics*, however, this reproach appears to be a classic case of shooting the messenger. What



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irks him about historians is not their obliviousness to frameworks, but their failure to provide social activists with grounds for hope. Not the historian, but history itself, is "narcoleptic." Despite his eagerness to extrapolate moral lessons from a reconstruction of the past, he complains mournfully of "the tedious, degrading rhythm of history." By reporting the past, more or less accurately, conventional historians intimate that mankind will probably never achieve a complete mastery over events. They focus on unintended consequences, always an embarrassment to reformers; and they draw attention to the chronological narcissism of revolutionaries who wildly overestimate the degree to which they have broken with the past.

As every reader of Sade knows, many "human potentials" can be vile and worthy of repression. A social order that prevents people from expressing everything they feel (for example, racism) may not be wholly inhumane. Unger undervalues such considerations. But even more puzzling is the consolation he draws from the thought that everything is possible. The assertion that society "always stands at the edge of a cliff" is offered as a promise, not as a threat. No one foresaw the Nazis, it is true, neither liberals nor Marxists. Having delivered predictive social science some near-fatal blows, history no doubt has further surprises in store. But to view cliff-hanging as an occasion for glee is unquestionably premature.

AUNT MEDEA

Beloved
by Toni Morrison

(Knopf, 275 pp., $18.95)

Much of the Afro-American fiction written over the last 25 years derives from a vision set down by James Baldwin, who described the downtrodden as saintly. According to Baldwin, those who had suffered most knew life best; they had more to tell the world. Though Negroes had been taught to hate themselves, though they were emasculated, driven mad, or driven to drink or to drugs, Baldwin insisted that somewhere in the souls of those black folk were truths that might set everyone free:

> I do not mean to be sentimental about suffering—enough is certainly as good as a feast—but people who cannot suffer can never grow up, can never discover who they are. That man who is forced each day to snatch his manhood, his identity out of the fire of human cruelty that rages to destroy it knows, if he survives his effort, and even if he does not survive it, something about himself and human life that no school on earth—and, indeed, no church—can teach. He achieves his own authority, and that is unshakable. This is because, in order to save his life, he is forced to look beneath appearances, to take nothing for granted, to hear the meaning behind the words. If one is continually surviving the worst that life can bring, one eventually ceases to be controlled by a fear of what life can bring; whatever it brings must be borne. And at this level of experience one's bitterness begins to be palatable, and hatred becomes too heavy a sack to carry.

Baldwin's success as the voice of the racially oppressed proved that something had changed in American entertainment. The United States had no sense of tragedy because Americans hate losers, William Carlos Williams observed in his emotionally brambled *In the American Grain*; but with Baldwin the claim to martyrdom, real or merely asserted, began to take on value. One no longer had to fear the charge of self-pity when detailing the suffering of one's group. Catastrophic experience was elevated. Race became an industry. It spawned careers, studies, experts, college departments, films, laws, hairdos, name changes, federal programs, and so many *books*. Blessed are the victims, the new catechism taught, for their suffering has illuminated them, and they shall lead us to the light, even as they provide magnets for our guilt.

Toni Morrison's new novel is another patch in that quilt, the most recent proof of the course of racial letters since Baldwin. It was not long before feminist ideology brought its own list of atrocities to the discussion:

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the horrors wrought by the priapic demon of sexism. Men and their obsession with manhood, with conquest, with violence, with the subjugation of the opposite sex and even the environment itself, were the problem. They had made things so bad that some feminists felt comfortable saying that "woman is the nigger of the universe," usurping a term of insult, and opening the way for those black women who would rise to contend for the martyr's belt that had been worn so long by the black man.

The influence of feminism on writing by black women led to work that was charged with corroborating the stereotypes of bestial black men. Zip Coon, the dangerous darkie whose pedigree stretched back to the minstrel show, became a stock character in black feminist writing. Old Zip replaced Uncle Tom as the lowest form of black life. In various manifestations he threw his children out the window, abused his wife until she murdered him, raped his daughter and drove her mad, or made intimate life so harsh and insensitive that lesbianism was the only human alternative. A pipsqueak in the world, he was hell on wheels at home. As Diane Johnson, writing on Toni Morrison and Gayle Jones, noted:

> In a demoralized subculture, everyone is a victim, but women, especially girls, are actually the most defenseless. . . . Morrison and Jones present them also as cleverer, more interesting, and eventually more homicidal than men; men are childlike, barely sentient, and predatory. Nearly all the women characters in these works have been sexually abused and exploited, usually as children.

Baldwin, Malcolm X, Eldridge Cleaver, and others had sung the same song, but now the circle of culprits was expanded. White America was still racist, violent, spiritually deficient, and exploiting, but the venom formerly reserved for Caucasians was spewed far enough to drench black men as well. Though black men clearly experienced racism, the worst of them were not above taking advantage of patriarchal conventions and brutally lording over their families—in the same way Southern white trash had used racism as an instrument of release whenever they were frustrated and Negroes were available to absorb the shocks of their passions. What might have begun as rightful indignation quickly decayed to a self-righteous, bullying whine and, went the claim, was turned inward, on one's own.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Black feminist writing was especially resented by those black men who had enjoyed the social, political, and sexual benefits resulting from the smug cartoonish version of "black manhood" promoted by radical organizations. That stylized image supposedly restored the patriarchal privilege denied by bondage and racism. Black feminists challenged the predictability of protest writing by black men, and the idiot cards of "positive black images," criticizing the plots and portraits as incomplete, as failing to tell the entire story and avoiding the problems of personal responsibility. The majority of black male writers had been content to see the difficulties experienced by black women at the hands of black men as no more than the byproducts of racism, but Negro feminists protested something different. As Johnson observed, "Undoubtedly, white society is the ultimate oppressor, and not just of blacks, but, as Morrison and Jones show, the black person must first deal with the oppressor in the next room, or in the same bed, or no farther away than across the street."

So the martyr's belt hadn't been worn very well by the self-declared champ. But exposing the shortcomings in protest writing by black men didn't automatically make writing by black women any better. Writers like Alice Walker revealed little more than their own inclination to melodrama, militant self-pity, guilt-mongering, and pretensions to mystic wisdom. What the Walkers really achieved was a position parallel to the one held by Uncle Remus in *Song of the South*: the ex-slave supplies the white children and the white adults with insights into human nature and the complexity of the world through his tales of Brer Rabbit. Better, these black women writers took over the role played by the black maids in so many old films: when poor little white missy is at a loss, she is given guidance by an Aunt Jemima look-alike.

Toni Morrison gained more from these changes in black literary fashion than anybody else. As an editor at Random House, she was one of the most powerful people in the New York literary world. With *Song of Solomon*, which appeared in 1979, she became a best-selling novelist too, proving that the combination of poorly digested folk materials, feminist rhetoric, and a labored use of

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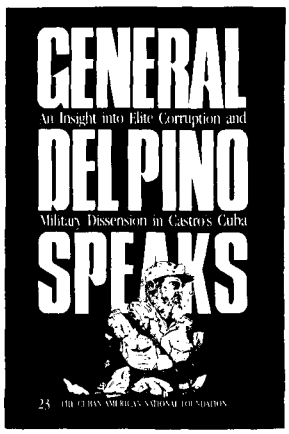
The Issue is Cuba



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magic realism could pay off. Shrewdly Morrison separated herself from the speeches and writing produced in the middle to late '60s by Stokely Carmichael, LeRoi Jones, Eldridge Cleaver, and H. Rap Brown, but avoided any serious criticism of their views. She told an interviewer that "those books and political slogans about power were addressed to white men, trying to explain or prove something to them. The fight was between men, for the king of the hill." Yet none of the black women whom Morrison proceeded to celebrate—Toni Cade Bambara, Gayle Jones, Alice Walker—took any significant positions of their own against the wrongheadedness of a black politics that mixed a romanticized African past with separatist ideas, virulent anti-white racism, and threats to overthrow the government of the United States "by any means necessary." Morrison didn't either.

What Morrison did do was consolidate her position as a literary conjure woman. Consider, for example, Mary Gordon's fantasy about her. It provides a generous taste of the spiritual and intellectual status that Morrison assumed in the dream world of white women:

> I once dreamed that she bought a huge old Victorian mansion. It would one day be beautiful, but now it was a wreck, with cobwebs, broken windows, mice, rats, and vermin everywhere. I asked her how she was going to deal with all that mess. She simply said, "No problem," and waved her arms in the air. Immediately the rats and roaches disappeared and the house was beautiful.

Hoo doo to you too.

BELOVED, Morrison's fourth novel, explains black behavior in terms of social conditioning, as if listing atrocities solves the mystery of human motive and behavior. It is designed to placate sentimental feminist ideology, and to make sure that the vision of black woman as the most scorned and rebuked of the victims doesn't weaken. Yet perhaps it is best understood by its italicized inscription: "*Sixty Million and more.*" Morrison recently told *Newsweek* that the reference was to all the captured Africans who died coming across the Atlantic. But sixty is ten times six, of course. That is very important to remember. For *Beloved*, above all else, is a blackface holocaust novel. It seems to have been written in order to enter American slavery into the big-time martyr ratings contest, a contest usually won by references to, and works about, the experience of Jews at the hands of Nazis. As a holocaust novel, it includes disfranchisement, brutal transport, sadistic guards, failed and successful escapes, murder, liberals among the oppressors, a big war, underground cells, separation of family members, losses of loved ones to the violence of the mad order, and characters who, like the Jew in *The Pawnbroker*, have been made emotionally catatonic by the past.

That Morrison chose to set the Afro-American experience in the framework of collective tragedy is fine, of course. But she lacks a true sense of the tragic. Such a sense is stark, but it is never simpleminded. For all the memory within this book, including recollections of the trip across the Atlantic and the slave trading in the Caribbean, no one ever recalls how the Africans were captured. That would have complicated matters. It would have demanded that the Africans who raided the villages of their enemies to sell them for guns, drink, and trinkets be included in the equation of injustice, something far too many Afro-Americans are loath to do—including Toni Morrison. In *Beloved* Morrison only asks that her readers tally up the sins committed against the darker people and feel sorry for them, not experience the horrors of slavery as they do.

MORRISON, unlike Alice Walker, has real talent, an ability to organize her novel in a musical structure, deftly using images as motifs; but she perpetually interrupts her narrative with maudlin ideological commercials. Though there are a number of isolated passages of first-class writing, and though secondary characters such as Stamp Paid and Lady Jones are superbly drawn, Morrison rarely gives the impression that her people exist for any purpose other than to deliver a message. *Beloved* fails to rise to tragedy because it shows no sense of the timeless and unpredictable manifestations of evil that preceded and followed American slavery, of the gruesome ditches in the human spirit that prefigure all injustice. Instead, the novel is done in the pulp style that has dominated so many renditions of Afro-American life since *Native Son*.

As in all protest pulp fiction, everything is locked into its own time, and is ever the result of external social forces. We learn little about the souls of human beings, we are only told

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what will happen if they are treated very badly. The world exists in a purple haze of overstatement, of false voices, of strained homilies; nothing very subtle is ever really tried. *Beloved* reads largely like a melodrama lashed to the structural conceits of the miniseries. Were *Beloved* adapted for television (which would suit the crass obviousness that wins out over Morrison's literary gift at every significant turn) the trailer might go like this:

"Meet Sethe, an ex-slave woman who harbors a deep and terrible secret that has brought terror into her home. [Adolescent sons are shown fleeing.] Meet Paul D, who had a passion for Sethe when they were both slaves, but lost her to another. [Sethe shown walking with first husband Halle, smiling as Paul D looks on longingly.] During slavery they had been treated as human beings at Sweet Home in Kentucky by the Garners. [Garners waving to their slaves, who read books, carry guns into the woods, seem very happy.] That was before the master died, the mistress took sick, and schoolteacher, the cruel overseer, took over. [Master Garner on deathbed, Mrs. Garner enfeebled, schoolteacher being cruel.] No longer treated like human beings, reduced to the condition of work animals, the slaves of Sweet Home plot to escape. [Slaves planning escape around a fire.] Sethe, swollen with child, bravely makes her way to Ohio, determined to see that the child is born free! [Sethe trudging along with great determination.] And there, in Ohio, the terrible deed takes place. [Slave catchers dismounting and Sethe running into a barn with her children.] Sethe's home is ruled by the angry spirit of an innocent child, until Paul D returns to her life. [House shaking, Paul D holding onto table as he shouts.]

"Now they are together, but the weight of the past will not let them live in the freedom they always dreamed of. Then the mysterious Beloved appears and becomes part of the family, charming Denver, Sethe's only remaining child, and the horrible past begins to come clear. [Scenes of Africans in the holds of ships.] Relive some of America's most painful moments—slavery, the Civil War, the efforts made by ex-slaves to experience freedom in a world that was stacked against them from the moment they were sold as work animals. But, most of all, thrill to a love story about the kinds of Americans who

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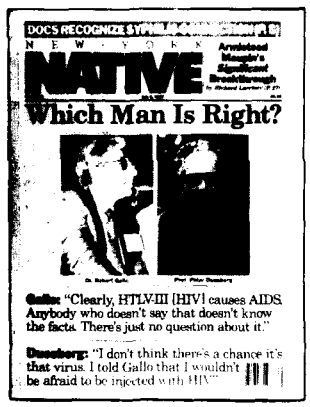

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struggled to make this country great. [Sethe, Paul D, and Denver walking hand-in-hand.]"

Beloved means to prove that Afro-Americans are the result of a cruel determinism:

> . . . [that's] what Baby Suggs died of, what Ella knew, what Stamp saw and what made Paul D tremble. That anybody white could take your whole self for anything that came to mind. Not just work, kill, or maim you, but dirty you. . . . Dirty you so bad you forgot who you were and couldn't think it up.

This determinism is also responsible for the character of Sethe, the earth mother heroine who might be called Aunt Medea. Mistakenly thinking that they will be sent back to slavery, Sethe gathers her four children for slaughter, and kills one daughter before she is stopped. When the novel opens, it is 1873. The ghost of the dead daughter has been haunting Sethe's home for years, frightening off neighbors, shaking, rattling, and rolling the house.

THE BOOK'S beginning clanks out its themes. Aunt Medea's two sons have been scared off: there is the theme of black women facing the harsh world alone. Later on in the novel, Morrison stages the obligatory moment of transcendent female solidarity, featuring a runaway indentured white girl, Amy Denver, who aids pregnant Sethe in her time of need:

> A pateroller passing would have sniggered to see two throwaway people, two lawless outlaws—a slave and a barefoot whitewoman with unpinned hair—wrapping a ten-minute-old baby in the rags they wore. But no pateroller came and no preacher. The water sucked and swallowed itself beneath them. There was nothing to disturb them at their work. So they did it appropriately and well.

Woman to woman, out in nature, freed of patriarchal domination and economic exploitation, they deliver baby Denver. (Amy is also good for homilies. While massaging Sethe's feet, she says, "Anything dead coming back to life hurts." When Sethe quotes the girl as she tells Amy's namesake the story of her birth, Morrison writes, "A truth for all times, thought Denver." As if that weren't gooey enough, there's the fade-out: "Sethe felt herself falling into a sleep she knew would be deep. On the lip of it, just before going under, she thought, 'That's pretty. Denver. Real pretty.' ")

Then there is the sexual exploitation theme, introduced in a flashback in the opening pages: for ten minutes of sex, the impoverished Sethe gets the name "Beloved" put on the gravestone. This theme in particular is given many variations. One of the most clumsy comes in an amateurishly conceived flashback designed to reveal that even Sethe's mother had a touch of Medea:

> Nighttime. Nan holding her with her good arm, waving the stump of the other in the air. "Telling you. I am telling you, small girl Sethe," and she did that. She told Sethe that her mother and Nan were together from the sea. Both were taken up many times by the crew. "She threw them all away but you. The one from the crew she threw away on the island. The others from more whites she also threw away. Without names, she threw them. You she gave the name of the black man. She put her arms around him. The others she did not put her arms around. Never. Never. Telling you. I am telling you, small girl Sethe."

It doesn't get much worse, or the diction any more counterfeit.

Baby Suggs, Sethe's mother-in-law, is philosophical about the house ghost, and introduces the stoicism theme when it is suggested that they move away. "Not a house in the country ain't packed to its rafters with some dead Negro's grief. We lucky this ghost is a baby," she tells Sethe. "My husband's spirit was to come back in here? or yours? Don't talk to me. You lucky. You got three left. Three pulling at your skirts and just one raising hell from the other side. Be thankful, why don't you? I had eight. Every one of them gone away from me. Four taken, four chased, and all, I expect, worrying somebody's house into evil." Through Baby Suggs we will eventually learn how right Paul D is to conclude that "for a used-to-be slave woman to love . . . that much was dangerous, especially if it was her children she had settled on to love. The best thing, he knew, was to love just a little bit; everything, just a little bit, so when they broke its back, or shoved it in a croaker sack, well, maybe you'd have a little love left over for the next one."

MORRISON IS best at clear, simple description, and occasionally she can give an account of the casualties of war and slavery that is free of false lyricism or stylized stoicism:

> Sethe took a little spit from the tip of her tongue with her forefinger. Quickly, lightly she touched the stove. Then she trailed her fingers through the flour, parting, separating small hills and ridges of it, looking for mites. Finding none, she poured soda and salt into the crease of her folded hand and tossed both into the flour. Then she reached into a can and scooped half a handful of lard. Deftly she squeezed the flour through it, then with her left hand sprinkling water, she formed the dough."

Or Paul D remembering the people he saw on the road after making his escape from slavery, people

> who, like him, had hidden in caves and fought owls for food; who, like him, stole from pigs; who, like him, slept in trees in the day and walked by night; who, like him, had buried themselves in slop and jumped in wells to avoid regulators, raiders, paterollers, veterans, hill men, posses, and merrymakers. Once he met a Negro fourteen years old who lived by himself in the woods and said he couldn't remember living anywhere else. He saw a witless coloredwoman jailed and hanged for stealing ducks she believed were her own babies.

BUT MORRISON almost always loses control. She can't resist the temptation of the trite or the sentimental. There is the usual scene in which the black woman is assaulted by white men while her man looks on; Halle, Sethe's husband, goes mad at the sight. Sixo, a slave who is captured trying to escape, is burned alive but doesn't scream: he sings "Seven-o" over and over, because his woman has escaped and is pregnant. But nothing is more contrived than the figure of Beloved herself, who is the reincarnated force of the malevolent ghost that was chased from the house. Beloved's revenge—she takes over the house, turns her mother into a servant manipulated by guilt, and becomes more and more vicious—unfolds as portentous melodrama. When Beloved finally threatens to kill Sethe, 30 black women come to the rescue. At the fence of the haunted property, one of them shouts, and we are given this: "Instantly the kneelers and the standers joined her. They stopped praying and took a step back to the beginning. In the beginning there were no words. In the beginning was the sound, and they all knew what that sound sounded like."

Too many such attempts at biblical grandeur, run through by Negro folk rhythms, stymie a book that might have been important. Had Morrison higher intentions when she appropriated the conventions of a holocaust tale, *Beloved*

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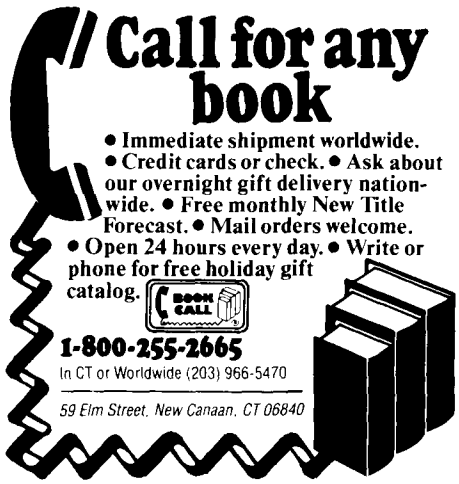
might stand next to, or outdistance, Ernest Gaines's *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* and Charles Johnson's *Oxherding Tale*, neither of which submits to the contrived, post-Baldwin vision of Afro-American experience. Clearly the subject is far from exhausted, the epic intricacies apparently unlimited. Yet to render slavery with aesthetic authority demands not only talent, but the courage to face the ambiguities of the human soul, which transcend race. Had Toni Morrison that kind of courage, had she the passion necessary to liberate her work from the failure of feeling that is sentimentality, there is much that she could achieve. But why should she try to achieve anything? The position of literary conjure woman has paid off quite well. At last year's PEN Congress she announced that she had never considered herself American, but with *Beloved* she proves that she is as American as P. T. Barnum.

STANLEY CROUCH

Stanley Crouch, a staff writer for the *Village Voice*, is at work on a biography of Charlie Parker.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THE NAZI IN THE RYE

Michael: a Novel by Joseph Goebbels translated by Joachim Neugroschel

(Amok Press, 131 pp., $6.95 paper)

This is the first novel by a German student in his 20s. It shows little promise. Originally, in fact, it had to wait some six years to find a publisher in Germany: probably written in 1923, it did not appear in print till 1929, by which time its author had already shown himself to be a master of words in a different sphere. By 1929 Joseph Goebbels was in charge of the Nazi Party organization in Berlin. In that year he was appointed Reich Propaganda Leader of the Nazi Party, and was loosing the flood of words on which Hitler was to be carried to success, and which would swamp the reasoning faculties of the German people for the next 15 years.

One wonders why the American publishers thought *Michael* worth translating and reissuing, and the misgivings are not removed by the publisher's blurb. With quotations taken out of context from works by Alan Bullock and George L. Mosse, it attempts to justify a new interest in Goebbels; it also carries an enthusiastic endorsement from David Irving describing Goebbels as "a tender, introspective patriot." But if the intention was to contribute to a neo-Nazi revival, or even to a reassessment of Goebbels, it has not succeeded. The book reveals only the shallowness of Goebbels's intellectual pretensions, and the lack of originality in his ideas.

Michael is a poor example of a popular German genre, the bildungsroman, which expresses the hopes and frustrations of a young man in a time of uncertainty, who seeks a path in life and ends in tragedy. Michael, the hero and narrator (the book is cast in the form of a diary), returns from the front after the end of the First World War; studies at the University of Heidelberg; writes poems; vacations at the seaside; has endless nebulous discussions with friends, including a Dostoyevskian Russian anarchist; falls in love with a girl called Hertha Holk, whose eyes, we are told on at least two occasions, are "grayish-green enigmas," but who is "very middle class." (Perhaps this accounts for her moments of good sense, as when Michael reports that "Hertha Holk thinks I ought to start preparing for my degree examinations.") After parting from Hertha Holk, Michael has some kind of breakdown, finds salvation by becoming a coal miner, and dies in a pit accident. (This was the actual fate of Goebbels's friend Richard Flisges, to whom the book is dedicated.) He leaves behind a postcard about being a pioneer of the new Reich and a drawer containing copies of *Faust*, the Bible, and *Thus Spake Zarathustra*.

Still, even bad novels can be worth reading. This one not only throws light on Goebbels's own character, but also contains many of the themes he was to emphasize in his propaganda campaigns,

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as well as many of the assumptions and values of the young Germans who were to give the Nazi Party their uncritical support. Goebbels himself was an unremitting diarist, writing, or later dictating, hundreds of words a day right up to April 19, 1945, some three weeks before he killed his six children and then committed suicide with his wife on the same day that Hitler died. It has been suggested that *Michael* is based on Goebbels's own lost diaries for 1919-20. It is indeed interesting to compare the fictional diary in *Michael* with the real diaries for 1925-26 that have survived.

There is the same self-pity: Goebbels's "My heart is silent! Life is muck!" echoes Michael's "Life is awful in these days. . . . Why do I find no fulfillment?" But the real Goebbels seems to have had more success as a lover: his "What a budding, bursting night of love!" contrasts with Michael's "I kiss Hertha Holk on her soft dreamy mouth; we are immensely embarrassed." The biggest difference, though, lies in the fact that Michael is a soldier returned from the front. Goebbels, by contrast, undersized and with a club foot, spent much of his life trying to demonstrate that he was at least as manly, as brave, and as patriotic as his contemporaries.

In his real diaries Goebbels appears as the same rootless bohemian as Michael, and it could be said of him as Michael says of himself, "What am I studying? Everything and nothing." In his early days in the Nazi movement, Goebbels was attracted by the socially radical aspects of National Socialism; and *Michael* is full of such sentiments as "We are all soldiers in the revolution of labor. We want the victory of labor over money." To justify his final decision to go down the mine, Michael says, "Soldiers, students, and workers shall build the new Reich. I was a soldier, I am a student, I want to be a worker." There is also a certain ambivalence about Russia. At the time of the Treaty of Locarno in 1925, by which Germany achieved a partial reconciliation with France and Britain, Goebbels wrote in his diary, "Germany gives in and sells out to the capitalist West. A horrible prospect: Germany's sons will bleed to death on the battlefields of Europe as the mercenaries of capitalism. Perhaps, probably, in a 'holy war against Moscow'!" And Michael's Russian revolutionary friend Ivan Vienurovsky is a kind of tempter who tries to liberate Michael from narrow German nationalism and turn him into an international anarchist.

IT IS that nationalism, however, that seems to be the strongest element in Michael's confused makeup: "Today there is only one calling for a young German: to stand up for the Fatherland." "The alien rabble must leave German art. The fate of German art is our own good German concern." "What does nationalism mean? We support Germany because we are Germans, because Germany is our Fatherland, because the German soul is our soul, because we are a piece of the soul of Germany." And in a peroration that sounds like innumerable later speeches by Goebbels and his Nazi colleagues, Michael proclaims:

> If we carry out our task—and we must carry it out—then Germany will reshape the world. When these bowed heads are raised someday, when these labor-hardened fists are clenched someday, when these weary eyes begin to flash someday, when these millions of throats shout someday: "Down with the shame! The Fatherland belongs to the man who frees it! Where are our guns?" Then the earth shall tremble before us.

To realize these goals a leader was needed. By the time *Michael* was published, Goebbels had found one in Hitler. He wrote in his diary, "He is a genius, the natural creative instrument of a fate determined by God. . . . He is like a child: kind, good, merciful. Like a cat: cunning, clever, agile. Like a lion: roaring and great and gigantic." But earlier, when Goebbels was writing *Michael*, he and his fictional hero were looking for just such a leader: "Someday, he will stand up and preach faith in the life of our Fatherland. Many people feel as I do, but only one man can put it into words. . . . Someone shall come! If I did not have the faith, I would not know how to go on living." It was an outburst to which poor, long-suffering Hertha Holk replied quite sensibly: "You say it so casually. That man will sacrifice you, he will sacrifice the ultimate blossoming of our youth."

ALTHOUGH it is unlikely that Goebbels had actually heard Hitler speak when he was writing *Michael*, that is hard to believe reading his description of a nationalist meeting:

> I sit in a room I have never seen. Among people who are alien to me. Poor careworn people. Workers, soldiers, officers, students. This is the German nation after the war. One sees old threadbare uniforms, the dirty tattered tunics bear the grieving signs of the great War. . . . I barely notice someone who suddenly stands in front of the room and bursts into speech. Timid and faltering at first, as if seeking words for things that are too great to be squeezed into narrow forms. Then all at once the flow of his speech is unleashed. I am captured, I perk up my ears. The man is gaining tempo. He seems illuminated. . . . He is no speaker. He is a prophet! Sweat pours from his forehead. Two glowing eyes flash like lightning in this gray, pale face. His fists are clenched. . . . I am reborn at that moment.

This might simply be an account of some nationalist hack orator transmuted by our knowledge of what was to come; but it is much more likely to have been inserted later, before publication, when Goebbels was already totally committed to Hitler.

While the real Goebbels in the mid-1920s was a clever politician, building up his position inside the Nazi Party and shrewdly assessing which faction to back in the fights within the party, the fictional Michael a few years earlier was seeking in the coal mine the lost

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comradeship of the trenches. Though there are clear differences between the novel and Goebbels's real life, *Michael* serves as a guide to aspects of Goebbels that do not emerge even in the published diaries. Goebbels was brought up as a Roman Catholic in the Rhineland, and Michael is still trying to come to terms with Christianity. Indeed, he is engaged in writing a drama called *Jesus Christ: a Dramatic Fantasy*. But Michael's Christianity is molded to fit his other prejudices. On the one hand, "Christ is the genius of love"; on the other, he is "hard and relentless. He drives the Jewish money changers out of the temple." Throughout the book the anti-Semitism is savage and unremitting. It is characteristic that Goebbels has Michael write that he would like to be a pastor on the Frisian island where he is spending his summer holiday and explain the Sermon on the Mount to simple people, and then in the very next sentences say, "I have not seen any Jews as of yet. That is a true delight. I am physically disgusted by Jews. I feel nauseated at the mere sight of one. . . . Christ cannot have been a Jew. I do not need to prove this with science and scholarship. It is so!"

Michael is a source book, then, for the prejudices of many young Germans in the 1920s. And even more disquieting than the predictable outbursts of anti-Semitism and the extreme anti-intellectualism ("Intellect has poisoned our nation") or the crude social Darwinism ("War is the simplest form of the affirmation of life") is the assumption that these views are perfectly compatible with, indeed justified by, the traditional achievements of German culture. Goethe and Schiller, Mozart and Beethoven, Schubert and Brahms, Hebbel and Keller are all important figures in Michael's artistic and intellectual world. He is, of course, always reading Nietzsche, but he is also enthusiastic about the gentle lyric poet Annette von Droste-Hülshoff, whose grave overlooking Lake Constance he and Hertha Holk visit.

In his subsequent career Joseph Goebbels was one of the greatest betrayers of the German cultural tradition. The fact that he thought of his fictional hero as part of that tradition suggests how hard it is to accept the view that National Socialism was a temporary aberration in German history, unrelated to what came before or after, the creation of the evil genius of Hitler alone. Reading *Michael* is not a particularly enjoyable task. But it reminds us that, despite thousands of books on the subject, many of the fundamental questions about the origins of Nazism are still unanswered.

JAMES JOLL

James Joll is professor emeritus of international history at the University of London.

WHAT LUCILLE KNEW

Rich in Love
by Josephine Humphreys

(Viking, 261 pp., $16.95)

The dispirited husband in Josephine Humphreys's first novel, *Dreams of Sleep*, returns home one evening to comfortable household sounds and is stricken with panic. "A house with a woman and children in it at dusk is frightening to the man who draws near and hears the muffled voices, those dishes being washed. The pure domestic horror of it rings down his spine." In *Rich in Love* Humphreys writes again about the domestic horror and seductive tyranny of family love.

Humphreys's subjects are seemingly enviable, smoothly functioning nuclear families that have been slowly corroding from within. She seizes upon them just when the machinery breaks down. Unlike *Dreams of Sleep*, however, a contemporary drama about the trials of a husband and wife struggling with a failing marriage, *Rich in Love* is an old-fashioned coming-of-age novel. Its central character as well as its plot and theme are staples of American fiction: the narrator, a shrewd, square, warmhearted 17-year-old, moves at first hesitantly, and then decisively, from her parents' moral orbit into her own. The novel could easily have slipped into the trite and saccharine, but once again Humphreys reveals an extraordinary ability to explore inner lives with subtlety, originality, and deadpan humor. *Rich in Love* avoids banality by ironically exploiting the catalog of clichés about unhappy families.

Lucille Odom perceives home as a place of refuge and comfort. (She likes to play Scrabble, collects modern gadgets and worthless antiques, and openly admits to her old-maid tendencies.) "The American family needed to hold itself more closely, I thought. Like mine. We were a hermit family. We had each other and we had our house, and nothing could touch us." But one afternoon she discovers her mother's VW van pulled off the driveway in front of the house, the door thrown open, and groceries melting on the front seat. The farewell note to Lucille's father, "hard as a hatchet-chop," waits inside.

Not long afterward her self-possessed older sister, Rae, returns from Washington, D.C., five months pregnant and just married, and proceeds to have a nervous breakdown. Her father, even while yearning for the return of his wayward wife, takes up with a cheery hair stylist named Vera Oxendine. And Lucille herself, to her astonishment, falls in love with her new brother-in-law, Billy McQueen. The novel follows her for the next six months as she attempts to entertain her father and sister, track down her mother, and revise her own stuffy ideas about love, sex, and marriage.

At the beginning of the family crackup, Lucille sees herself as the sole voice of sanity, the brisk yet deeply concerned caretaker of her irresponsible elders. "Do not think I didn't know what love was. . . . It had been accumulating silently over the years like equity in a house. I was rich in love, even though no one could see it." Her evaluations of the others are a mixture of exasperation and tenderness. She observes her father's initial misery with alarm:

> When I left he was still stretched out on his side, looking at the window. It is disconcerting to see a man lying on his side, which is somehow a very feminine position. An odalisque. His arms and back had a slack look, as if all the muscles in them had been cut. . . . Uh-oh, I thought: Can a man become effeminate as the result of the loss of his wife?

And, reluctantly warming to Billy as she conspires with him to rouse Rae from her "stewing in the craziness of pregnan-

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cy," she worries about his vocation as a history teacher: "It made my stomach sink. My teachers had always been morose because of their jobs. One reason I got straight A's in school was that I wanted to make these people happier. They were tired and hungry for love; and what's more, their cars broke down constantly."

LUCILLE occasionally reverts to type—tough yet vulnerable, wisecracking yet sensitive, brainy yet sexually untutored—but she is far from a static character. Both as observer and actor, she is irreverent and sometimes unpredictable, as engaged in the turbulent lives around her as the others are cut off. Humphreys does not linger fussily over character development. These people are shaped with seeming spontaneity, through their own honest responses to life's haphazard course. Lucille's sudden reappraisal of her lifelong tie to her father and her recent friendship with Billy are artfully conveyed in a few brief scenes. Her discovery of love's unpredictable demands, which appears almost offhand, is perfectly in keeping with her pragmatic and probing approach to new experience.

Taking her father his coffee one morning, she is startled to hear him whistling in the shower, and even more startled when she finds Vera Oxendine in his bed. "I could have made a scene and demanded to know what was going on here, did they think they could carry on like that under my roof; but I didn't have the energy for it." By the time she ends up in Billy's bed, she has developed a savoir faire that he can't begin to muster. She coolly recognizes that this is a single encounter between a tender man who is desperate to recapture his wife and a girl who is intent upon experiencing sexual passion and physical comfort:

> "I'm not going to give you up, Lucille," he said in an even voice.
>
> "Give me up! You don't have me to give up. We don't have each other. We are only in the same kitchen, drinking the same brand of beer. That is the extent of our connection."

Humphreys is less successful when she ventures outside the boundaries of domestic discord. As in *Dreams of Sleep*, she sets the novel around her hometown of Charleston, South Carolina, and to broaden her picture of contemporary alienation, she tries to mingle the lives of black and white. The two races represent "two human worlds of identical misery and passion," as the wife puts it in *Dreams of Sleep*, "but occupying opposite quadrants.... In a way, equal but separate." In *Rich in Love* Humphreys creates a black family whose eccentricities are meant to mirror those of the Odoms. The ties between the two families are purportedly deep yet mysterious.

"Almost every white family I knew had a black family they gave clothes to, but there was more between us and the Pooles," Lucille says. "As a child, I thought of them as our shadow family. They *matched* us." There are scattered references to Rae's close friendship with her classmate Rhody Poole, and to Rae's earlier incarnation as a singer in a black band; and the Pooles become accomplices in the flight of Lucille's mother. Yet in the end the family has no more than a totemic significance, uttering the stray prophecy and guiding the befuddled white clan toward a more honest existence. In one of the novel's few contrived scenes, Lucille runs into Rhody Poole and receives some wise instructions about how to handle Rae, her mother, and herself. "A new day was dawning on me," Lucille reflects with uncharacteristic ponderousness, "now that Rhody had given me answers to questions that had long held a cloud over my head."

And Humphreys herself is occasionally heavy-handed. She is more adept at conveying people in turmoil than she is at rendering their recovery. Her satiric vision gives way at the end to a mannered sentimentality and a tendency to succumb to pat psychology. *Dreams of Sleep* concludes with a reverie about the possibilities of regeneration and the "reweaving" of "hopes and dreams." Lucille finally tells us: "Our family is not what it was" (Rae has pulled through her terrifying home delivery, and Lucille has recuperated from a breakdown of her own after saving her sister and the baby), "but we are all gravitating back into family lives of one sort and another; it is a drift that people cannot seem to help, in spite of lessons learned the hard way." Taking her baby niece on a bike ride, she reflects, "What I want her to know is the strength and fragility of things, the love and the luck hidden together in the world."

Humphreys could have dispensed with these homilies and ended the novel far more effectively with another scene. Late one night Lucille looks out her bedroom window and sees her father—to whom she has denied the car keys—sitting "tall, almost noble, riding his Snapper lawn mower into the dark of the oaks along Bennett Street," speeding toward the house of Vera Oxendine. That gesture of paternal defiance says all that needed to be said about the erratic ways of family love.

DOROTHY WICKENDEN

THE WILD WEST

Rebecca West: A Life
by Victoria Glendinning

(Knopf, 320 pp., $19.95)

When, in the spring of 1912, a young English writer named Cicely Fairfield decided to call herself Rebecca West, it was assumed that she had taken her new name from the rebellious heroine of Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*. Ibsen had created The New Woman, and it was reasonable that a 20-year-old girl who was just setting out to write about social and sexual matters in a journal called *The Freewoman*, and who intended to be a free woman in her own life, should claim an alliance with him.

But there was another, earlier Rebecca West who was, one might argue, a more significant ancestor. That Rebecca West was one of four English women executed for witchcraft in 1647. Two of the four repented, but West and one other "dyed very Stuburn, and Refractory with out any remors, or seeming Terror of Conscience for their abominable Witchcraft." (You can read about her in *The Full Tryals, Examination, and Condemnation of Four Notorious Witches, At the Assizes held at Worcester on Tuesday the 4th of March* [1647].) The later Rebecca West didn't die for her beliefs and practices; rather,

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she made a reputation out of them, and a long, successful career. But her Stubborn and Refractory ways caused her trouble all her life, and made her the problematic figure that she was, both in the world of letters and in English society—a disturbing, threatening, unclassifiable female who said what she thought and did what she wanted.

IT DOESN'T seem too fanciful to call such a woman a witch. For witches are women who live outside society's limits of toleration and would rather die than come in, and West was that sort of woman. And witches have more power than men think they should have, and she was that sort, too. The power that she had was, first of all, intellectual: she was brighter than most men, and that made men nervous. It was also verbal: she had a witty, acerbic style, and she used it like a knife. And as if that weren't enough, she had sexual power: she was a beauty, but more than that, she was clearly a woman of great sexual force—such force, indeed, that she came to believe that she rendered some men impotent simply by her own sexual energy.

With such powers, it is not surprising that she made herself known in London literary circles very quickly. She was not yet 20 when she began writing for *The Freewoman*, 23 when she published her lively, irreverent book on Henry James, barely 25 when *The Return of the Soldier*, her brilliant first novel, appeared. By the end of the war, she had made her reputation as a journalist in England, and was beginning to be known in the United States. (Her first American essay appeared in THE NEW REPUBLIC in 1914: it was titled, appropriately for her, "The Duty of Harsh Criticism.")

But she had made another kind of reputation as well. She had had an affair with H. G. Wells and had borne a son; and what was worse from society's point of view, she had kept the child with her (being a Stubborn and Refractory woman). So she became to conventional people a shameless hussy, and to more liberal ones England's principal example of The Liberated Woman. The tinge of notoriety, of the not-quite-acceptable person, stayed with her; even now I would guess that more people know that Rebecca West had Wells's bastard than know the title of any book she wrote.

Rebecca West hated her reputation as a rebel, though it was never in her nature to cease thinking rebelliously. She felt that it had excluded her from her rightful position in the hierarchy of letters, not only in her early, outrageous days, but even at end of her long life. When the *Times Literary Supplement* published a front-page celebration of her work on the occasion of her 81st birthday, she wrote gratefully to the editor, praising him for his courage. "I have forced my way into recognition," she wrote, "but I am treated as a witch, somebody to be shunned. My books . . . have always been treated as if they were maleficent spells."

By the time she wrote that letter, West had written the books on which her literary reputation rests, or would rest if it were stable—teeters is perhaps a better word: six novels, three books of criticism, the monumental, unclassifiable *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, the two volumes of postwar trials. And she had gathered her share of praise, one might think. *Time* had called her "the world's No. 1 woman writer," and the *Evening Standard* had billed her as "The Greatest Journalist of Our Time." She was rich and famous, and she was a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire. Yet she saw herself as a witch in the world's eyes, a woman who had had to force herself into recognition. Whatever the praise, it had

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been insufficient; there was more to Rebecca West than that.

One obstacle to recognition, in her mind, was clearly gender. She saw herself not simply as an unappreciated writer, but as a shunned woman. Gender was a subject that she had thought and written about all her life, from her first suffragist articles to her late, unpublished memoirs. Though she was a feminist, she was not optimistic about the relation between the sexes. Men, she concluded, do not like women; "or perhaps men do not like, period." She thought it possible that men are deficient in the capacity for love, and she found it difficult to love them: "There is something so desperately unloveable, even unlikeable, about the male sex," she wrote near the end of her life, after a lifetime of trying.

YET, bad bargain though they were, men were necessary to women, even to a woman as independent as Rebecca West was. How else is one to explain the most surprising event in her whole life, her marriage? In 1930, when it took place, she was world-famous as a journalist, socially in demand for her wit and beauty, and self-supporting on a fairly grand scale. She spent summers on the Riviera, wore elegant Paris clothes, and sent her son to a Public School. Yet she married Henry Andrews, who was as dull as an English summer, an unsuccessful banker whose strongest trait was his incompetence, a man who could do nothing right, not even sleep with his wife (he gave up after five years and turned to philandering). West complained endlessly about him to her friends, but the marriage lasted until his death in 1968. Evidently the condition of being married gave her something that she needed. But it also took something—took energy, took time, took self-respect when her husband began to stray—that was drained from her work, and diminished her accomplishment. Or so she thought.

But if it had not been Henry it would have been somebody else, as she sadly recognized, for sexuality was an essential element of her being: "I have never been able to write with anything more than the left hand of my mind," she wrote to a friend; "the right hand has always been engaged in something to do with personal relationships." And the first page of her unpublished memoirs contains this sentence: "I was never able to lead the life of a writer because of these two overriding factors, my sexual life, or rather death, and my politics." (What did she mean by sexual death? The end of her sexual activities? That's sad enough. Or that her whole sexual life had been a death? That's a good deal sadder.)

Sex and politics appear in that sentence as obstacles to a full literary life, but they were also two preoccupying subjects of West's work. There were others, too: law, history, religion, psychology, literature. We are, I trust, beyond the point of calling such copious minds masculine; but it is nevertheless true that she ranged more widely in her interests, and put more various ideas into her writing, than any other woman writing in English in this century has done. And perhaps that too was a factor in her lack of recognition, for she could not be contained within any category into which woman writers could be assigned. She said as much to Victoria Glendinning, near the end of her life: "I should like to have been a novelist. I should like to have been a historian." Glendinning replied, as all of us would: "But you are a novelist, you are a historian." But the point is that she wasn't: she wasn't, that is, that comfortable type, the woman novelist, nor even a woman historian. She wasn't a woman anything. Her English publisher, Jonathan Cape, called her "a writer of scattered books," and that is accurate; but it isn't a category to make a reputation in.

STILL, Cape got the first term right: she was, above all, a writer. Not a journalist, not a woman writer, but simply a writer, an artist who wrote wonderful prose, who took chances with language and cadence, and who wrote poetically even of prosaic subjects. To this one should add that she was, all her life, a speculative writer, moving through and beyond the observed facts to moral meanings. Here, as an example of what I mean, is the end of her account of the trial of John Amery, convicted of high treason in a London court after the war. Before passing judgment, the judge spoke to Amery, reminding him that British internees had warned him of his crime. His remarks seemed to be irrelevant, at that point in the trial. "Yet," West wrote:

> if what the Judge said had little application to Amery, he seemed to say it because his mind had been shocked into flight underground to some place near the sources of our general destiny. The Judge said slowly, with accusation and querulous wonder in his voice, "They called you traitor and you heard them." It was as if he spoke to all men, marveling at their knowledge of good and evil and their preference for evil, and looking at his own heart from far away that he might see the cause.

That is a characteristic passage—so deliberately cadenced and so expansive, moving from one man in a courtroom to our general destiny, and the evil in the hearts of men.

One might argue that the wonderment that she heard in the judge's voice was West's real subject all of her life—that men should know good and evil, and choose evil. She scrutinized that subject from many angles, but she found no orthodox institutional explanation of it. She called herself a Socialist, but she had no party; she professed to believe in the Christian conception of man, but she had no church. In her thinking, as in her living, she was herself.

I HAVE wondered, thinking about her life and work, whether the biography of such a woman is not inevitably a diminishment of her. Here is the life, so troubled and untidy, so full of the failures of love and the small vanities and follies of anybody's existence. And there is the work, so intelligent, so searching, and so individual. Does one explain the other? Only in the most superficial sense, I think. Perhaps West had some such feeling when she left among her papers a request that two biographies should be written: one short, and one "full." Maybe she hoped to get the mess and razzle of her story told first, so that later on the story of her work and thought could be dealt with.

Victoria Glendinning's book is the short one, and one must admire the thoroughness and economy with which it gets a long life told—all the affairs, the troubles with her son, the unhappy marriage, the long battle with old age—and with tact and sympathy. Glendinning is a skillful biographer, and she is also clearly a kind and intelligent woman. Yet her book does diminish her subject, because it does not offer a convincing, full-face portrait of the other side of Rebecca West—of the witch, whose powers of thought and imagination were great enough to write those extraordinary books. The books are mentioned here, along the way, but they are not really confronted, and the ideas and the human perplexities that troubled her mind, and drove her into art, are here more like interruptions in the story than like obsessions.

For that other story, the witch's story,

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we will have to wait, it seems, for the "full" biography; and it may be that we will not find it even there. Perhaps it can only be discovered in Rebecca West's own version, in the books that she wrote; perhaps it is only there that her extraordinary power will reveal itself, undiminished by the tribulations and pleasures of a woman's life.

SAMUEL HYNES

Samuel Hynes teaches English at Princeton University.

TRB, *from page 4*

separation of powers is Justice Robert Jackson's concurring opinion in the 1952 case (*Youngstown Sheet & Tube*) about President Truman's attempt to nationalize steel mills during the Korean War. Jackson makes the reasonable point that, in areas of shared power, the president surely has less authority to act against the express will of Congress than he does if Congress hasn't ruled at all.

Executive power freaks prefer to cite a 1936 case (*Curtiss-Wright*) in which Justice George Sutherland had some nice things to say about the president's special role in foreign policy. Constitutional scholar Oliver North, for example, quoted these passages in his congressional testimony last summer. But in that case, concerning arms sales abroad, Congress and the president were in agreement that the president should make the details of policy alone. The constitutional question was whether the legislature went too far in *allowing* the executive branch to have this authority.

If the modest claims of the War Powers Act are excessive, what role is left to Congress in foreign policy? There is still the power of the purse. But that is what the Boland amendment—which attempted to cut off funds for the *contras*—was about, and many conservatives argue that it too was unconstitutional. Congress, they say, cannot use its appropriation power to dictate specific policies, and certainly cannot prevent the president from raising money from foreign governments to run wars secretly or against Congress's wishes. Check and mate.

As Timothy Noah argued in these pages a while back ("War Powers Inaction," July 6), the result of an unenforced War Powers Act has been to let Congress have it both ways: it can whine self-righteously about any military action without taking responsibility for the failure to act. Arguably, a real congressional role in war-and-peace decisions would produce a more responsible Congress.

But there's no use denying what the practical effect will be if Congress has a greater role in the decision whether to use military force. The practical effect will be to make it harder, not easier, to risk the lives of American soldiers abroad. Five hundred thirty-five members of Congress inevitably will be slower than one isolated commander in chief to conclude that a foreign policy objective is worth the shedding of blood. That's not a disadvantage of the War Powers Act. That's the whole idea.

CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 6*

never have been acknowledged by TRB. Only when the looming menace to commoners' modest deductions also threatens their more affluent and celebrated colleagues is there any prospect of relief.

THOMAS ROBBINS
Rochester, Minnesota

ORTHODOX PROTEST

To the editors:

Among the first examples of extremism on the part of Orthodox Jews that Abraham Rabinovich recounts is a demonstration ("Rampaging Rabbis," September 14 & 21). Can Orthodox Jews do no right? Though Israel was not established as a religious state in 1948, its founders showed a respect for religion. According to agreements made in the early days of the state, for example, El Al was not to fly on the Sabbath. But eventually the airline surreptitiously started service on the Sabbath. Recently, after much protest, these flights were discontinued. For some reason it was considered scandalous for the Orthodox to protest for a return to the terms of agreement. This unjustified outrage is the same that fuels Mr. Rabinovich's writing. The story's implicit angle is blatant: secular is good, religious is bad. It is reported with a certain disdain that haredim object to the construction of a public swimming pool; but it is portrayed as reasonable that the seculars block rezoning of facilities that the haredim want for their community. Is it such an outrage that the haredim wish to live in an environment they consider ideal?

DAVID GERSTMAN
Baltimore, Maryland

SINGLES AND TWENTIES

To the editors:

F. B.'s Washington Diarist ("Camera Hogs," September 14 & 21) extols the purported benefits of early marriage. But maybe there is a good reason why he can find no other advocates besides Jonda McFarlane—namely, many young people today are not ready for marriage. He asserts, "Most people in their 20s . . . have plenty of time for infants and toddlers." On the contrary, most people entering professions spend their 20s in an all-consuming quest for success in their careers, and have little energy or emotion left to invest in an intimate relationship, much less in being a parent. Furthermore, the longer process of formal education and training serves to delay the development of the emotional maturity that is so important to effective parenting.

HARVEY M. BERMAN
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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Real Estate Porn

AROUSED BY those photographs in the back of the Sunday *New York Times Magazine*? You know: Stately four-bedroom neo-Georgians in Rye with three acres, eight bedrooms, game rooms, views of Long Island Sound, with names like Milton Point Manor or October Hill and price tags of $2,655,000 (will they settle for $2,558,000? do the drapes convey?). "Luxury Homes and Estates" is the highlight of many a young careerist's weekend in the age of Reagan—15 pages of ads for luxury triplex penthouses overlooking Central Park, 18th-century estates in Ireland, cottages in Southampton for $4 million, rustic getaways in the Berkshires, colonials in Rumson, tacky million-dollar ranch houses in Great Neck, private islands in Maine. The section keeps getting bigger, the houses more extravagant. How about this, for $15 million? "Behind high iron gates at the end of long curving driveway w/distant hilltop views . . . 40 ft marbled entrance hall w/fireplace, grand marble staircase to muraled circular balcony," etc., etc. And it's in Bedford, right near the prison where Jean Harris is locked up. People obviously must buy these things, but more people just look at them and imagine themselves inside. Seven-Eleven has banned *Penthouse*. Sales of *Hustler*, *Leg Show*, and *Massive Mammaries* are plummeting. But the real estate porn is alive and well in the *New York Times* and turning our best and brightest young investment bankers into drooling voyeurs. They excuse themselves and go to the men's room with a copy of *International Homes* (120 pages of ads—just ads) and flip through the pages, fantasizing about walking down to the Sound in double-breasted Ralph Lauren blazers, embroidered with the family coat of arms (*some* family's, anyway), wife at the side, brandy snifter in hand. Little blond kids tug at their lime trousers. They turn and watch the sun set behind the dormers and turrets of Harbor Acres (6 br, fpl, cntry kitch). Not only is America's productive capacity being sapped by the influence of these lewd photographs and suggestive copy, but "Luxury Homes and Estates" is clearly leading some into lives of crime. Who wouldn't resort to insider trading when a Victorian in Sea Girt (with separate maid's quarters) is at stake? Real estate porn is a blight on the nation. I am sure Robert Bork will act quickly to eradicate it when he gets on the Supreme Court.

VOTING ON the Bork nomination presents a frightening prospect to many senators. Not because they're afraid of offending their constituents and losing the next election. Just the opposite: most constituents don't care whether Bork gets on the Court; this whole business of picking judges is something they would rather not be involved in. Jurisprudence, with its black robes and its Latin incantations, should be left a mystery—like the Electoral College. Choosing judges is something most Americans are happy to leave to their legislators. Which is exactly the difficulty that senators now face. It's a great comfort to be able to check the polls and count your mail and vote everyone else's conscience. Griffin Bell, the attorney general under President Carter, said the other day of the Bork hearings, "If we pick Supreme Court justices by what people want, we are going to be in bad shape." He is right, of course, and he only made the Senate feel more uncomfortable.

ONE SENATOR, Mark Hatfield of Oregon, a liberal himself, posits a novel solution to the Bork problem. "I'd rather have a smart conservative than a dumb liberal," he said last week. Really? What about a dumb conservative who doesn't understand Hayek or Edmund Burke and might make a mistake and vote to ban capital punishment or uphold *Roe* v. *Wade*? There could be a strategy here. If they manage to stop Bork, Planned Parenthood and People for the American Way might want to start backing Gordon Humphrey for the Court.

WHEN JOE BIDEN makes a mistake, he admits it. The *Washington Post* takes a different tack: it perseveres, grinds its readers into dust. I'm referring to an incredible phenomenon that's on view each week in the *Post*'s new Sunday magazine. Six months ago, the magazine ran a long article about the return of the Washington Senators, complete with interviews with the new owner and players. There were color photographs of Senators in their uniforms tossing the ball around and hitting long shots to the left. But it was all a joke, an elaborate conceit. The Senators were not returning to Washington at all. The hoax was not particularly transparent, and the *Post*'s switchboard was flooded with hundreds of calls from readers who didn't think it was very funny. The response of the magazine's editor has been to prove that he wasn't wrong, so each week he has treated a million readers to another episode in this stupid saga, including league standings (the Senators are playing .500 ball, if you're interested). I assume it will all end soon; the team is clearly not going to make the World Series.

FOOTBALL IS another story. Here again, we're watching a display of pig-headed perseverance, but with a good reason. The owners of professional sports teams have a great deal. They're exempt from the normal rules of economic fair play that guide the rest of us. Collusion to keep down the salaries of their employees is perfectly OK for them. If GE wants to hire a hot engineer away from IBM, it simply offers the guy more money or a company car or a better pension plan. It doesn't have to give his former employer a first-round draft pick or three middle-level programmers.

ACTUALLY, the football strike doesn't affect me. I don't watch football anyway. I watch C-SPAN. My office is three blocks from the Capitol, but I never really knew what was going on there until cable TV came to our neighborhood. Now I'm hooked on debates in the Senate chamber: Tim Wirth nodding off in the president's chair, Jesse Helms making arcane parliamentary points, Robert Byrd strutting in the well, no one paying much attention. C-SPAN's cameras give the whole show a flat, cinema-verité look, as though they were filming a drug transaction from a rented apartment across the street. Talk about voyeurism! It's better, almost, than real estate porn.

J. K. G.

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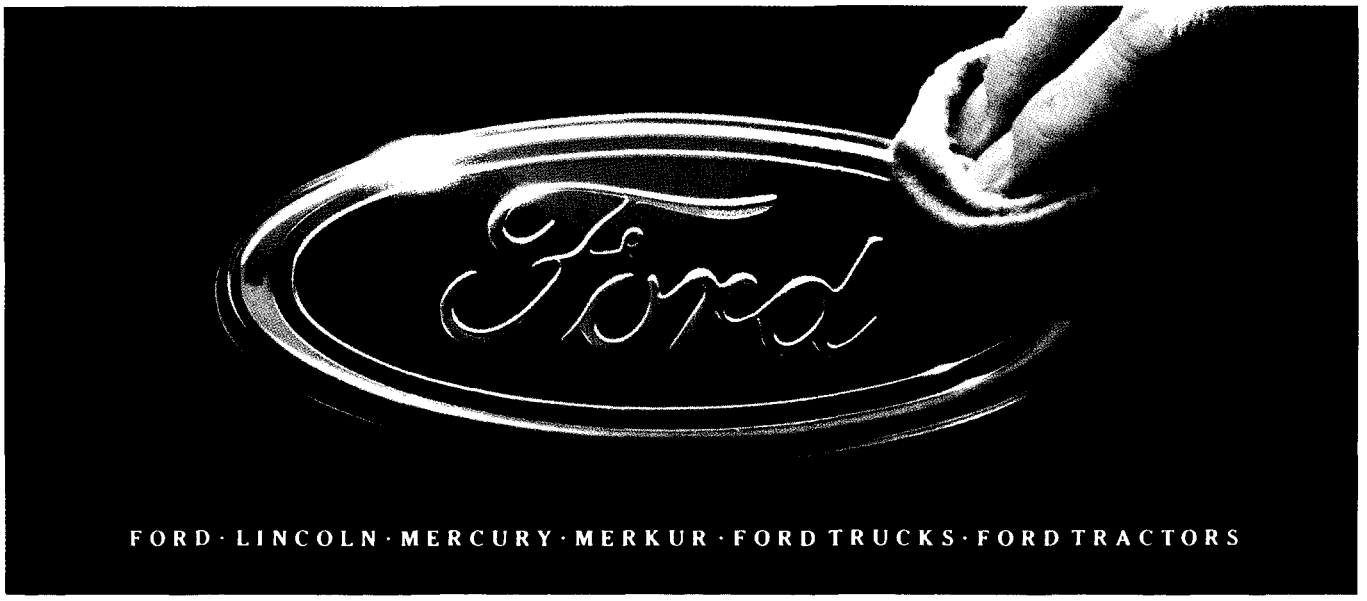

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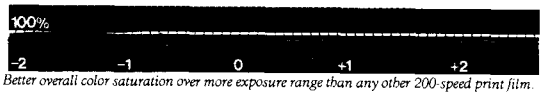

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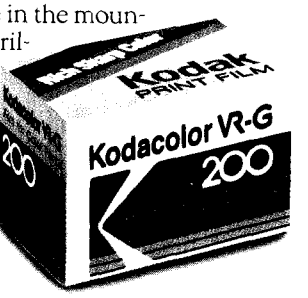

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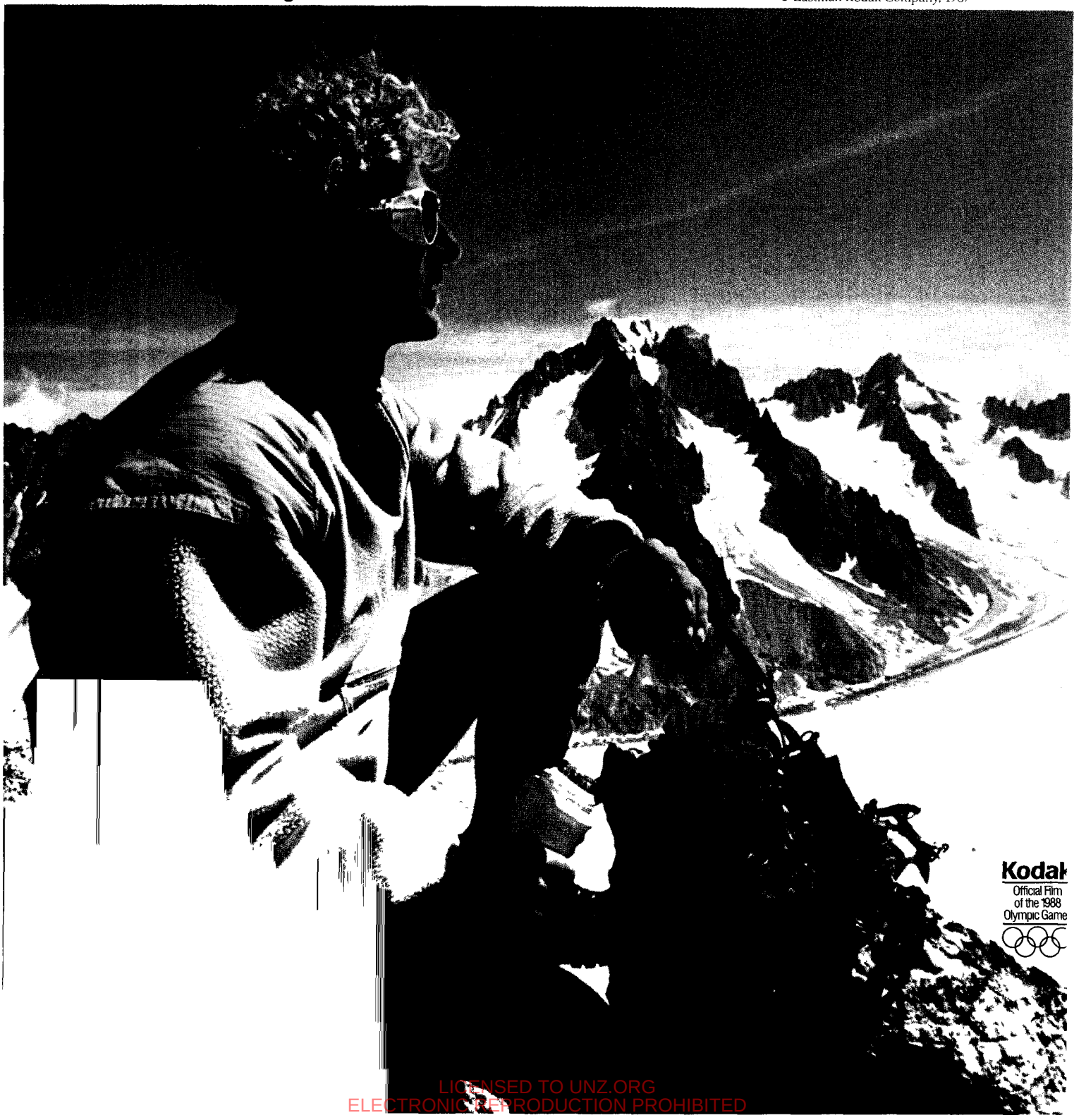

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